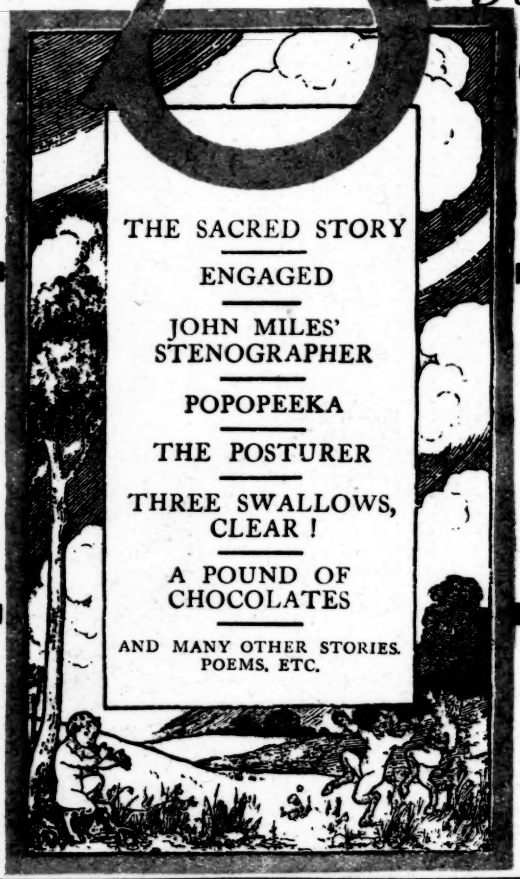
L996.c.40
63

Vols. 63 and 64

THE SMART SET

A Magazine of Cleverness

To Amuse. Not to Instruct



THE SACRED STORY

ENGAGED

JOHN MILES' STENOGRAPHER

POPOPEEKA

THE POSTURER

THREE SWALLOWS, CLEAR!

A POUND OF CHOCOLATES

AND MANY OTHER STORIES. POEMS, ETC.

JANUARY 1921

1/6 NET

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
31 DE 20
CAMBRIDGE

S378.

GREAT Barker SALE

BEGINS DEC. 30 —— ENDS JAN. 22

EVERYTHING FOR LADIES' WEAR AT SALE PRICES
EVERYTHING FOR MEN'S WEAR AT SALE PRICES
EVERYTHING FOR THE HOME AT SALE PRICES
EVERYTHING FOR THE TABLE AT SALE PRICES

Sale Catalogue of 100 pp. sent post free on application.

THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright in all countries and must not be reprinted

Editor—J. W. MILNE

JANUARY, 1921

THE POSTURER	Stanley Olmsted	1
TREATISE ON SIMPLICITY	T. F. Mitchell	22
LINES	Le Baron Cooke	22
AMY'S STORY	Thyra Samter Winslow	23
THE GREEN CORD	K. T. Edmondson	31
THE SINGER	A. Newberry Choyce	33
WHEN YOU CAME TO ME	Oscar Williams	34
THE STRONGER	Zoë Ongley	34
STAR MAGIC	Joseph Upper	35
A POUND OF CHOCOLATES	Walter Yust	39
THE KISS OF LOVE	Stewart Holmes	43
REDEMPTION	David Morton	44
HAD I FORGOTTEN	John Russell McCarthy	44
A PASTEL OF VIENNA	Helen Woljeska	45
STUDY IN SENTIMENT	Russell A. Hartman	46
THREE SWALLOWS, CLEAR!	Donal Hamilton Haines	47
THE FIRE IS OUT IN ACHERON	Maxwell Anderson	56
WOW	W. B. Seabrook	57
THE WALL	Eugene C. Dolson	60
JOHN MILES' STENOGRAPHER	Nan Apotheker	61
THE END	Ralph B. Cooney	64
KEEPSAKES	Frances Avery Faunce	64
POPOPEEKA	Lawrence Vail	65
AT THE CURB	Vincent Starrett	74
THE SACRED STORY	J. B. Hawley	75
THE MATCH	Lewis Brown	80
FAITH	Walter McLaren Imrie	81
ENGAGED	Laura Kent Mason	93
MOODS	Grace Hazard Conkling	96
ABOUT FASHIONS AND OTHER THINGS	Mary Pitcairn	98

Annual Subscription, 18/- post free. Foreign Subscription, 19/- post free.

Published by THE ROLLS HOUSE PUBLISHING CO., LTD., Breams Buildings, E.C., for the Proprietor, J. W. Da Costa.

"The Smart Set" Magazine, Dane's Inn House, 265 Strand, W.C. 2
to which all editorial and advertising matter should be addressed.

STROLLING PLAYERS Play, Sing to, and Entertain you afternoons and evenings.

YOU FEEL AT HOME AT QUALITY CORNER Billy's TEA ROOMS BRIGHTON
"Just by the 91 KING'S ROAD BRIGHTON Grand Hotel." LTD.

TAKE TEA AT Billy's STAY TO SUPPER

EMPHATICALLY A NEW NOTE IN TEA SHOPS

START 1921 with one.

HANDWRITING expresses individuality, so always use a nib with exactly the same "action." Choose Waterman's Ideal and you will have a pen that will serve and please you for life.

Waterman's Ideal Fountain Pen

Three types: "Regular," from 12/6; "Safety" and "Self-Filling," from 17/6. Nibs to suit all hands (exchanged gratis if not quite right). Of Stationers and Jewellers. A copy of "The Pen Book," sent free by post on request.

L. G. SLOAN, Ltd., The Pen Corner, Kingsway, London, W.C. 2.

RALPH LYNN *Star Comedian, Vaudeville Theatre*

ARTHUR CLEAVE *Well-known Actor and Film Star*

ACADEMY OF CINEMA ACTING

DAILY INSTRUCTION

Apply for terms:

R.L. ACADEMY,

15, PAVILION RD., KNIGHTSBRIDGE

HANDSOME MEN

NOTHING so improves personal appearance as that slight smooth tan which comes with exposure to the sun and air.

"SUNBRONZE DE LUXE"

gives a perfect simulation of this tint, is **undetectable, perfectly harmless, and absolutely genuine,** to which its 5,000 testimonials received from every quarter of the globe is sufficient evidence. Unique in method and perfection of result, SUNBRONZE DE LUXE has stood the **TEST OF TIME.** Forwarded free from observation, price **10/6** (*Mark II de Luxe*, **3 guineas**). Fresh Complexion Tint for Ladies, on same principle, at same prices. Direct from

Sunbronze Laboratories,
157, Church Street. Stoke Newington, London.
(*Established* 1902.)

CHRISTMAS TIME IS KIDDIES' TIME

Every year at Christmas our Wards are thronged with little ones who are obliged by sickness and suffering to spend what might have been for them, and is for their more fortunate fellows, the day of all the year, away from Home and the Yuletide joys and happiness. Many of these children are poor and needy, and sadly in want of care and attention. All deserve sympathy.

Please help us to give them a good time

Let them share in the general rejoicing and happiness as best they can. While you plan for the happiness of your own little ones, please remember those less fortunate, and send as big a donation as you can afford to

GREAT NORTHERN CENTRAL HOSPITAL

HOLLOWAY, N. 7. **(Popularly known as the Great Northern Hospital.)**

GILBERT G. PANTER, *Secretary.*

JUST PUBLISHED

The Whole Art of Dining and Table Decorations

The Host and Hostess's Best Household Book.

The ONLY book ever published dealing so comprehensively on the subject of its title and reflecting all that is thoroughly first-class. Contains over 500 pages full of absorbing interest to Epicures and the Hostess who entertains with distinction.
Price 21/- net (Post paid, 22/6). Of all leading Booksellers, or direct from the Publishers—

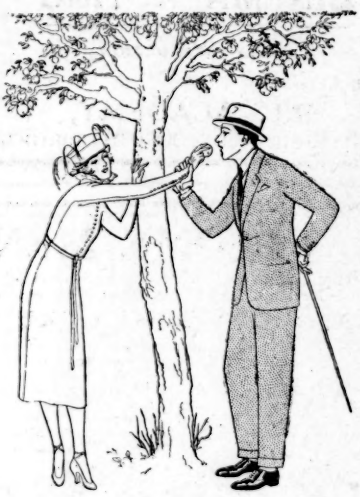
CARMONA & BAKER, 5, ENDELL STREET, LONDON, W.C.2.

Specimen Illustrations and detailed Prospectus Free on Application.

POPE & BRADLEY
Civil Military & Naval Tailors
of OLD BOND ST LONDON W

A GIFT OF PROFIT

By H. DENNIS BRADLEY.



A BITING OFFER

THE mind of the public is to-day in a state of anxious uncertainty regarding prices, and trade consequently fluctuates in an extraordinary manner. There is no stability. This is fundamentally due to political unrest, to the restriction of foreign markets, and to excessive taxation.

Let me briefly state the woollen situation. All the woollen materials for next winter (November, 1921) are already manufactured. They are now being sold to merchants, and there is no drop in price on those of 1920. West End tailoring wages are up 100 per cent. on the pre-war rate, therefore it is illogical to anticipate any appreciable reduction in the price of men's clothes until 1922—if then. These are the facts of costs.

The chief problem, however, of employers to-day is the question of employment. And to create employment I have determined to foster production to its utmost at any personal cost. In doing so I lay no claim to philanthropy or altruism, and any apparent virtue must be distinctly qualified.

To explain: The financial year of Pope and Bradley ends on December 31, and with the excessive taxation—so crushing that it has killed incentive and made development unprofitable—I am, frankly, not interested in the amount of profit made by my House this year. The Excess Profits Tax is now responsible for financial anomalies.

From now until December 31 I shall disregard and forego all profits, and make Lounge Suits and Overcoats for my customers at actual cost price:

Lounge Suits - - £10 10 0 net cash.
Overcoats - - £8 8 0 net cash.

These prices represent cost of materials and workmanship only; no overhead or establishment charges are included. In other words, every suit and overcoat will be actually sold at a loss until the end of 1920, but employment will be maintained at full capacity, and this is one of the vital necessities of to-day.

All the materials sold will be of the finest and most expensive quality, and the tailoring at Bond Street, at Southampton Row, and at Manchester, will be in accordance with the reputation of my House.

It would be economically unsound to continue to trade on such a basis, and on January 1 prices must be immediately revised. Next year the Excess Profits Tax will die a belated death—killed by its own boomerang.

14 OLD BOND STREET W
& 11 & 13 SOUTHAMPTON ROW W C
Also ROYAL EXCHANGE MANCHESTER

The most efficient Hair Treatment Service in the World is that associated with the name of

M. DE NEUVILLE (Late of BROMPTON ROAD)

Whatever the age, whatever the trouble, M. de Neuville guarantees success in every case he undertakes.

Treatments scientifically diagnosed and compounded to suit the case. 15- and 30/- according to formula and quantity supplied. Consultation or Postal Diagnosis. Packing and postage included in this charge.

Hours 10 to 6 daily. (Saturdays, 10 to 1. By appointment only.)

THE BELGRAVIA LABORATORY, 8a Lower Belgrave Street, Eaton Square, S.W. 1
(Two doors from Ebury Street Post Office).

You *can* be free from Sea and Train Sickness by using liquid **YANATAS** A Genuine Nerve Sedative, and a certain remedy for sleeplessness

3s. per bottle (by post 9d. extra)

MR. STARKIE, CHEMIST, GRAND HOTEL BUILDINGS, W.C. 3

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS.

LITERARY

AUTHORS' MSS. placed at highest prices with over 100 Publishers and Periodicals, also in America. £320 in free Prizes! For awards see *Daily Mail*, 1st of every month. Terms for stamp. CAMBRIDGE LITERARY AGENCY, 8 Henrietta Street, London, W.C. 2.

FINANCIAL

STOCKS AND SHARES.—Advantageous system of purchase by instalment. For full particulars, address: Dept. "SS," LONDON AND COUNTY TRUST, LTD. (authorised capital, £1,000,300), Coventry House, South Place, London, E.C.

SCIENCE

SIGNORINA BASTINIA gives the original answers of Planchette to questions asked by earnest inquirers. A test question, 1/6. Apply by letter only, NORTH HOUSE, BISPHAM, LANCASHIRE, with stamp for reply.

ASTROLOGY.—Obtain special astrological study of your life by an expert astrologer. Business, Changes, Matrimony, Future Prospects. Send birth date, p.o. 1/-, stamp. LEO LYON, 34 (H.6), Moorfields, Liverpool.

PERSONAL SERVICE

ATHERTONS' EXPERT MALE and FEMALE DETECTIVES for all matters requiring SECRECY and TACT. Blackmail, Divorce, Investments, Missing Relatives, Financial, Dishonest Employees, and all kinds of difficulties promptly dealt with. See original testimonials. Advice free.
38 & 39, Piccadilly, W. 1. Tel. Regent 2869.

WRIGHT'S DETECTIVES. For Private Inquiries and Secret Watchings this Agency stands facile princeps for ability; vide Press; consultations free. T.N., London Wall 8,977. Edgar Wright, Manager, 62, MOORGATE ST. (near Bank of England). West End Branch 145, Oxford St., W. (T.N. Museum 6891.)

DRESS

SMART GOWNS, Costumes, Furs, etc., at quarter original cost.—The Central Dress Agency, 14, Upper Baker Street (next to Bakerloo Tube).

BUSINESS TRAINING

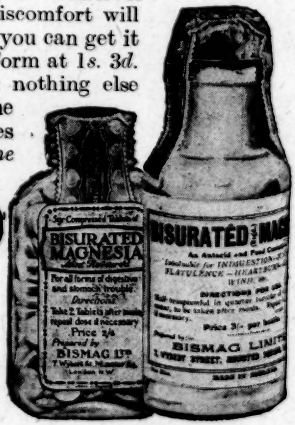
ACCOUNTANCY, SECRETARYSHIP, COSTING, ADVERTISING, SHORTHAND. — Specialized Postal Courses (exam. coaching, and practical training). Individual tuition taken at home, in spare time, under a staff of Honoursmen, Chartered Accountants, and Barristers-at-Law. Moderate fees — by instalments, if preferred.
Send postcard for "Students' Guide"; free and post paid.
Metropolitan College, Dept. 335, St. Albans.

THOUSANDS of people who suffer from Dyspepsia, Indigestion, Flatulence, and other stomach complaints fly at once to Bisurated Magnesia directly they notice the first symptoms of their trouble. They do so because experience has taught them confidently to expect relief within five minutes of taking a dose. They know, too, that not only does Bisurated Magnesia relieve these distressing maladies, but that a timely recourse to it actually prevents stomach disturbance.

The reason is a simple one and is based on the fact that Bisurated Magnesia, being an antacid, neutralises the harmful stomach-acids the moment it comes into contact with them. As excess of acidity is the cause of over ninety cases of indigestion out of every hundred, it follows that if the acidity is counteracted the stomach will be freed from its hindrance. Hundreds of letters could be quoted to show what a boon Bisurated Magnesia is, but the following letter is a typical one :

28, Tudor Road, Tranmer, Birkenhead.
I have suffered from chronic gastritis for 12 years and was 12 months in hospital. My sister-in-law, who is a hospital nurse, told me about Bisurated Magnesia; I bought a bottle and it stopped the vomiting and soon gave relief from the agonising pain in the stomach caused by wind. After three bottles I was able to go to my work and I am almost free from my stomach trouble now, but I keep a bottle of Bisurated in the house in case of an attack. (Signed) R. ROBERTS.

If YOU suffer from any form of Indigestion, take Bisurated Magnesia and experience that delightful freedom from the diet restrictions so common to stomach-sufferers; eat and enjoy just whatever you fancy, safe in the knowledge that no subsequent discomfort will worry you. Let Bisurated Magnesia help you at once; you can get it from any chemist in Powder Form at 3*s.*, or in Tablet Form at 1*s.* 3*d.* and 2*s.* 6*d.* But you must have **Bisurated** Magnesia : nothing else will do, so look carefully on the package for the name BISMAG LIMITED. This is your protection: it saves your time and your money by ensuring that you get *genuine*



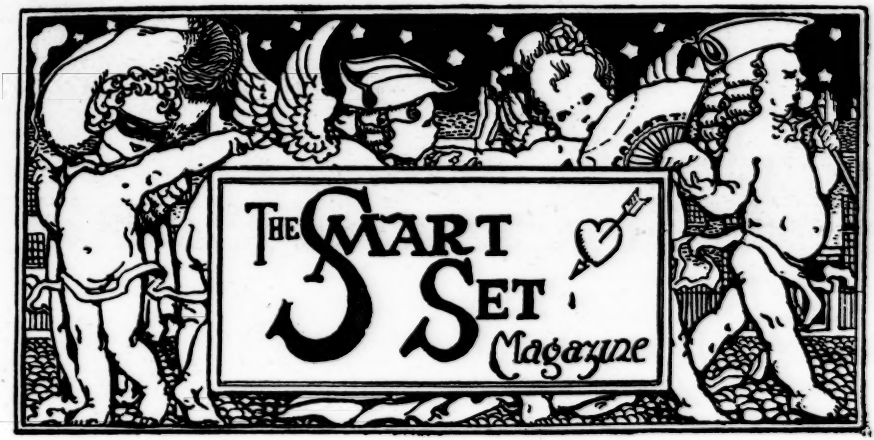
BISURATED MAGNESIA

The kind that does you good

PREPARED SOLELY BY BISMAG LIMITED

WYBERT ST., MUNSTER SQ., LONDON, N.W.1.

Vol. LXIII JANUARY, 1921 No. 1



THE POSTURER

By Stanley Olmsted

CHAPTER I

THERE are still many to whom the figure of Willie Edgerton fifteen or twenty years ago will be more vivid than any other to be summoned out of the present. He belongs, not to the ages indeed, but to a mellow temporal enshrinement. And in ears where youth lingers as the surge in a seashell his name will ring clearer than any of those sounding amid the clang of calciums and cameras—the blurred stage chaos of to-day.

He was perhaps at his best during those seasons when he played a juvenile rôle, supporting the joint starring tour of beautiful Irene Trowbridge and Vic Stratton—preceding their divorce.

A single play sufficed the pair. It held its own for months on Broadway and then "coined" money in cities other than New York. It underwent acid tests in return engagements, including even the vertiginous area which rarely wants anything twice.

Thirty-six months, only casually interrupted, with three inexpensive sets and a small cast, grinding out returns as were they wheels and cogs of a mint-mill! Then, Mr. and Mrs. Victor Stratton took their play over to England.

Unfortunately, they elected not to take their juvenile with them. "No organization can stand three stars," remarked Mrs. Irene Trowbridge Stratton. So Willie Edgerton remained behind.

His part had been a scant dozen "sides"—so short that he had contemptuously refused it at first. He had been persuaded to play it finally by eloquent argument on the filled-in blanks of the contract.

Yet anyone might have realized . . . Anyone, that is to say, less fatuously self-assured than the eye-filling Irene or less sex-ridden than poor, nearly senile Vic Stratton, with his vast areas of stupidity underlying his over-advertised wit.

In shelving Willie they were slaying the ambrosial goose laying the golden egg with the regularity of seven or eight weekly performances. The twelve little sides had brought him into the

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
31 DE 20
CAMBRIDGE

play for nearly as many brief scenes. They seemed to occur as if by some compensatory magic, with a sudden quickening of pulses, every time the play's inadequately Shavian badinage grew stodgy. The fact being that his part, trimmed to such sketchiness at the insistence of the stars, was of those conceptions that are interwoven with a playwright's fabric. It never vanished. The collective audience mind conserved it in its absence.

Had the character, so exactly visualized by Willie, never appeared at all, it would still have dominated the author's theme, probably to the author's own surprise. Had the gluttony for visibility in Irene and the avidness for lines in poor Vic further reduced this character, say to two sides instead of twelve, it would no less certainly have insured success. Always provided that Willie Edgerton had spoken those two sides, in plain view, thus vitalizing the arid stretches when he was removed from the range of the audience's vision!

Needless to add, the play, without Willie, proved a dismal failure in London—the first of a series of failures, for ever changing the tide of Vic Stratton's luck and directly inducing Irene's relentless defection.

"Eye-filling" is no misnomer in Irene's case. Even to-day, with a score of added years growling impotently at her battlements, it expresses, very literally, the epic contour, the regal command of facial and corporeal lines, not too immobile, holding their own with something of the authority of a harbour statue. Whereas old Vic Stratton, divorced by her immediately following the London fiasco, has been dead, in a fashion, these many years—having genuinely breathed his last and attained cremation some several months ago.

But we are wandering afield from Willie.

One of the many minor longings of his life was to be known as "William." Always on the programmes his name was printed, as if copied from a silver christening mug: William Orpen Edgerton. Not one of his old friends but had been taken to task, in Willie's familiar note of boyish plaintiveness: "Why *don't* you call me by my own name? I never did like 'Willie'—'William' isn't so bad. But the other sounds like pinafores and bed sheets!"

Wasted effort. When any member of The Thespians—now moved up from the Thirties—addressed Willie as William, he always spoiled it by winking at somebody and inflecting with elaborate care.

Willie need not have minded. At bottom he probably did not, for all his occasional petulance. A gentle derision was his portion through life. It bred the warm affections in those immediately about him which were the breath of his being.

Calumny was also his portion. But it somehow always fell back before the radiance of his youth—as gleaming a thing when he was no longer very young as when it had emerged, full-blown, in his boyhood; nay, his very childhood. For at an age when the average youngster is amorphous, inarticulate and ill-favoured, he had proved a sort of Jason, heading an Argonaut touring cities of the West, in juvenile opera. Completely poised at fourteen, clean-cut, clear-eyed, vigorous in his delicacy of coral and amber, it is doubtful if at forty aught had been added to him—or subtracted.

Five years or so thereafter, to be sure, something had been both added and subtracted. A sometimes haunted expression, retouching the challenge of his eyes. . . . An intermittent lacklustre, in the glow once luminous as Hellenic iambics. . . . A rime of colourlessness, where his Saxon hair curled, close-clipped, above his ears. . . . At five and forty Willie had drunk, ultimately, of the nectar of sensation, if not of the waters of wisdom. Yet, and paradoxically, not to repletion. Repletion with him was unimaginable. There are vessels that will shatter before they will overflow.

Sotto voce—it required but the osteopathy of his Japanese valet, or, behind

the footlights, a rub of grease paint (Beckman's No. 2—"Juvenile Hero Flesh") to reincarnate his echo of the singing Achilles, bantering birds of dawn from a dallying chariot.

CHAPTER II

At forty, and even for a time thereafter, it had been Willie's habit to proclaim his actual age, to cry it aloud. There was sensation, there was tang, watching the effect on incredulous ears loath to believe him twenty-five.

At forty-five his tactics had undergone a revision. He began to remark, with jovial spirit:

"I'm getting along! Nearly up to the mid-thirty milestone! Old Fat-and-Forty will be comin' on before I know it!"

It is one thing to look so much younger than you are that your count of years appears miraculous. It is quite another merely to inspire the polite comment, "You don't look it." Willie had, at forty-five, become gradually conscious of the latter tendency in persons to whom he announced the proud truth about his age. More significant yet, certain women, indubitably amiable of intention, began to compliment him on the marvellous manner in which he "kept" his youth. Well he realized that no person is complimented on "keeping" his youth so long as the evidence in the case has matter-of-courseness. As well might one's flatterers say to one, "How young you do look to look as old as you do!"

Amid all the welter of little triumphs, little romances, little sensualities, and little anguishes which boiled up, even as champagne bubbles, in the crucible of his evasive life, this was perhaps the most acrid drop: that he must take to lying about his years because the truth had come at last to be believable.

Yet it was, at forty-six, that the first of a series of mirages—three of them, to be specific—shimmered out in the clear rose-void of his Indian Summer. For him it was a season unclouded by any conscious complex of disillusionment. He could never genuinely persuade himself that Apollo's chariot had passed its meridian. Only his surface shrewdness was convinced—the thing in him that prompted the understatement of his age—that enlisted the exhaustive service of his Japanese masseur.

Deep in his heart, or perhaps his temperament, lay the faith of some physical immortality peculiar to himself. Underlying his actor's reactions, naïve and ingenuous, this faith pervaded him as the conviction of original sin pervades a Methodist.

What might seem a waning, to eyes of envy, what might even strike his own epidermis sensitiveness as a taking-off, a dimming along some scarce perceptible declivity, yon side the apex—mere heresies. Cobwebs! He brushed them from him, with a gesture as light as they. . . .

Nor does the threadbare metaphor of Apollon's chariot lack renewed appropriateness. Certain women clung to the habit of likening him to Apollo. Their resources of mythology were of the usual scantiness. They might have found readier images in Icarus Hyacinthus, or even Patroclus. Narcissus will not do. The persistence of that evocation, pining to naught at its own water-mirrored intangibility, belies the thing which leaped out toward all life in Willie Edgerton—the soul of him, yearning toward all things that are not of the soul, naked with outstretched pagan-ivory arms.

And these mirages—at forty-six?

Well, no non-existent thing can throw even a phantom image. They arose, unforewarned, upon the horizon of one who had moved in circles of a sunlit desert. Mirage. Phantom. Thin air. But to him they were no less, and no more, than the vanished but never remote adventures from which they were refracted. Faded romances had their hour of renascence. His gesture toward them was, in each instance, the same. As he had met the passion-glowing reality twenty years back, so he met the baseless similitude of twenty years thereafter.

CHAPTER III

MINNA KROWES was the first of the

kept alive the

one, with the

fancor,

might not

ous crimes

possibly

Countess; then a Princess

But the little wenches still

Minna Krowes. Since the days

when her father—railroad king by courtesy, pirate by inference—kicked one of their representative venerable editors from his Wall Street office, that type of periodical has never disregarded the habit.

It may well be admitted that R. Bradley Krowes regretted his impetuousness. He was rewarded, four days later, by the full publication of the threatened scandal—with an added measure of malice for each and every venerable bruise. He had to expend four times the money, doing openly and impotently what he might have done privately and efficiently had he but kept his temper. The first issue had been sold before he could buy up all the other issues especially manufactured for his purchase.

Thereafter, a typed motto was added to the list kept on his blotter: "He that controlleth his spirit taketh his city at half-price, with a rebate."

For the rest, R. Bradley Krowes lived to treble his millions in three or four coups, so sensational as to be still remembered by archæologists of finance. But he did not live to get even with the venerable editor. And Minna Krowes, whose infatuation for a juvenile actor once lined this editor's purse, remains Minna Krowes to this day, in the airy but indestructible little sheet that has gathered all the imitators of that sort of thing. To read of her there is to pic-

[illegible]

When a bellboy at the Chesapeake had run in with a message for Willie by the Princess de Vaselli, he [illegible]

"They did not say I was in?" he observed from his steam bath as he [illegible]

Especially he prided himself on its [illegible] "Nobody was ever connected with Willie's room and a bellboy not connected with Willie. Moreover it was but [illegible] o'clock p.m. To arise before four was to outrage a [illegible] Willie's theories of personality and juvenility.

"Oh, no, sir! We said just what we always says, sir—that we was almost sure you was not in, sir, but that we would see."

"Tell the Princess de Vaselli"—Willie drawled the name with luxurious languor, sensing its composite effect upon Buttons—"that I left word I would be in at five."

"Right-o, sir!"

Willie did not linger in his bed. As the elevator door slammed, inspiring Buttons against disillusionment at such eagerness, he bounded to the floor. Into the mouthpiece of the telephone fastened to his wall he shouted for the barber shop.

"You, Tony? Send up that new masseur. My Japanese boy is on a vacation. Mr. Edgerton speaking."

The receiver was snapped back into its hook.

A black satin mandarin's coat was thrown over pongee pyjamas.

Willie might have seemed to be arraying himself for a carnival fete or professional work in a midnight roof revue. He was only hurrying out to the shower.

As the regulated alternations of hot and cold water [illegible] or sizzled, or splashed over his body, his thoughts formulated:

"She's two years older than I. That means that in two years more she'll be fifty. (When under a shower, a man doesn't have to lie.) Poor Minna! Her eyes weren't so bad. But oh, that chin! Like those old steel engravings of egg-faced eighteenth-century courtesans. Phew! Au-oo!"

The final strange noises had nothing to do with Minna or her chin. All his pink, much-osteopathized cuticle had turned to gooseflesh. In his preoccupation he had turned on the ice-cold pins-and-needles. Meditations of Minna gave way to shuddering terrors of rheumatism. He knew! There had been a three-days' nightmare last winter. He steamed himself until he cooked; hurried into an enveloping towel as to a sanctuary.

At five, precisely, he sat with a quartette of friends at a table in The Thespians' grill. All four were actors like himself. None of them was yet thirty-five. Willie was immeasurably the youngest among them. They might have been four sedentary uncles priding in a gambolling young blood of a nephew.

A waiter approached him. He spoke with the clarified distinctness that characterizes his species when they announce a lady to an actor at his club.

"Mr. Edgerton—the Princess de Pacelli wants to speak with you on the telephone. She says it's by appointment, sir."

Willie turned to his companions.

"That woman!" he smiled—his radiant smile, free of taint of malice. "She's been calling me up all afternoon."

"The Princess de Pacelli," repeated one of the men, and ruminated. "Why—that's Minna Krowes, isn't it, Willie?"

Interest at the table arose like mercury in a thermometer that has been thrust near a radiator. The romance of Minna Krowes' infatuation for Willie had been the basic ingredient of all the latter's press stuff for nearly a quarter-century, thriving on its senility until the war had clubbed it comatose. The count over it had been taken. At exactly this instant it arose, vinegar-sponged and refreshed, ready for a new round.

Willie stirred languidly in his seat, as if to arise.

"Oh, it's Minna Krowes all right. I suppose I might as well see what I can do for her."

"Go to it, son."

Another remarked, "If you still haven't time for Minna, just turn her over to me."

A third seized him by the shoulders and playfully assisted him to a standing posture.

Amid such tokens of added prestige, Willie wagged his hands behind him at them, in the shoofly gesture, and moved in leisurely glory out of the grill and into one of the booths.

CHAPTER IV

At eight that evening he dined with the Princess de Pacelli, whom he had not seen since before her installation in the Faubourg St. Germain as the tolerantly snubbed Countess de Montfauçon.

She had taken a surprisingly modest suite of rooms in one of the older hotels. According to the newspaper summary of persons on her incoming steamer, she had come to New York for rest and recuperation before resuming her war work in Paris. America was not yet in the conflict by a year. But the habit of special headlines even over the arrival of an American-born princess had been temporarily abandoned. Not a New York daily had so much as clicked her image as she came down the gang-plank.

She was, therefore, in her actual presentment, a discovery for Willie. A mere twenty-five years or so had perhaps less chemical significance for him than for any other man alive. His imaginative grasp of time or evolution was an irreducible minimum. In a mechanical way he had expected a changed Minna Krowes, of course. What he had not expected, or at least projected,

CHAPTER III

MINNA KROWES was the first of them.

That name of her girlhood had been kept alive despite two marriages: the one, with the dandiacal Count de Montfauçon, whom she divorced that he might not reduce her to pauperism; the other, with the scholarly but impecunious Prince de Pacelli, who had speedily succumbed to the war and influenza—possibly also to the boredoms of unaccustomed restoration in the fortunes of his house.

First a Countess; then a Princess Dowager. But the little weeklies still call her Minna Krowes. Since the days when her father—railroad king by courtesy, lucre pirate by inference—kicked one of their representative venerable editors from his Wall Street office, that type of periodical has never disregarded the habit.

It may well be admitted that R. Bradley Krowes regretted his impetuousness. He was rewarded, four days later, by the full publication of the threatened scandal—with an added measure of malice for each and every venerable bruise. He had to expend four times the money, doing openly and impotently what he might have done privately and efficiently had he but kept his temper. The first issue had been sold before he could buy up all the other issues especially manufactured for his purchase.

Thereafter, a typed motto was added to the list kept on his blotter: "He that controlleth his spirit taketh his city at half-price, with a rebate."

For the rest, R. Bradley Krowes lived to treble his millions in three or four coups, so sensational as to be still remembered by archæologists of finance. But he did not live to get even with the venerable editor. And Minna Krowes, whose infatuation for a juvenile actor once lined this editor's purse, remains Minna Krowes to this day, in the airy but indestructible little sheet that has fathered all the imitators of that sort of thing. To read of her there is to picture her as a sort of ancient crony of the executive and reportorial staff.

Willie knew, of course, about her being back in New York.

When a bellboy at The Thespians told him he was wanted on the telephone by the Princess de Pacelli, he underwent only the briefest instant of agitation.

"They did not say I was in!" he glowered from his ascetic brass bed in a cell near the shower bath.

Especially he prided himself on his maximum degree of telephonic isolation. Nobody was ever connected with Willie's room until a bellboy had first connected with Willie. Moreover, it was but three-thirty o'clock p.m. To arise before four was to violate a hygienic conception interknit with Willie's theories of personality and juvenility.

"Oh, no, sir! We said just what we always says, sir—that we was almost sure you was not in, sir, but that we would see."

"Tell the Princess de Pacelli"—Willie drawled the name with luxurious languor, sensing its composite effect upon Buttons—"that I left word I would be in at five."

"Right-o, sir!"

Willie did not linger in his bed. As the elevator door slammed, insuring Buttons against disillusionment at such eagerness, he bounded to the floor. Into the mouthpiece of the telephone fastened to his wall he shouted for the barber shop.

"You, Tony? Send up that new masseur. My Japanese boy is on a vacation. Mr. Edgerton speaking."

The receiver was snapped back into its hook.

A black satin mandarin's coat was thrown over pongée pyjamas.

Willie might have seemed to be arraying himself for a carnival fête or professional work in a midnight roof revue. He was only hurrying out to the shower.

As the regulated alternations of hot and cold water trickled, or sizzled, or splashed over his body, his thoughts formulated:

"She's two years older than I. That means that in two years more she'll be fifty. (When under a shower, a man doesn't have to lie.) Poor Minna! Her eyes weren't so bad. But oh, that chin! Like those old steel engravings of egg-faced eighteenth-century courtesans. Phew! Au-oo!"

The final strange noises had nothing to do with Minna or her chin. All his pink, much-osteopathized cuticle had turned to gooseflesh. In his preoccupation he had turned on the ice-cold pins-and-needles. Meditations of Minna gave way to shuddering terrors of rheumatism. He knew! There had been a three-days' nightmare last winter. He steamed himself until he cooked; hurried into an enveloping towel as to a sanctuary.

At five, precisely, he sat with a quartette of friends at a table in The Thespians' grill. All four were actors like himself. None of them was yet thirty-five. Willie was immeasurably the youngest among them. They might have been four sedentary uncles priding in a gambolling young blood of a nephew.

A waiter approached him. He spoke with the clarified distinctness that characterizes his species when they announce a lady to an actor at his club.

"Mr. Edgerton—the Princess de Pacelli wants to speak with you on the telephone. She says it's by appointment, sir."

Willie turned to his companions.

"That woman!" he smiled—his radiant smile, free of taint of malice. "She's been calling me up all afternoon."

"The Princess de Pacelli," repeated one of the men, and ruminated. "Why—that's Minna Krowes, isn't it, Willie?"

Interest at the table arose like mercury in a thermometer that has been thrust near a radiator. The romance of Minna Krowes' infatuation for Willie had been the basic ingredient of all the latter's press stuff for nearly a quarter-century, thriving on its senility until the war had clubbed it comatose. The count over it had been taken. At exactly this instant it arose, vinegar-sponged and refreshed, ready for a new round.

Willie stirred languidly in his seat, as if to arise.

"Oh, it's Minna Krowes all right. I suppose I might as well see what I can do for her."

"Go to it, son."

Another remarked, "If you still haven't time for Minna, just turn her over to me."

A third seized him by the shoulders and playfully assisted him to a standing posture.

Amid such tokens of added prestige, Willie wagged his hands behind him at them, in the shoofly gesture, and moved in leisurely glory out of the grill and into one of the booths.

CHAPTER IV

At eight that evening he dined with the Princess de Pacelli, whom he had not seen since before her installation in the Faubourg St. Germain as the tolerantly snubbed Countess de Montfauçon.

She had taken a surprisingly modest suite of rooms in one of the older hotels. According to the newspaper summary of persons on her incoming steamer, she had come to New York for rest and recuperation before resuming her war work in Paris. America was not yet in the conflict by a year. But the habit of special headlines even over the arrival of an American-born princess had been temporarily abandoned. Not a New York daily had so much as clicked her image as she came down the gangplank.

She was, therefore, in her actual presentment, a discovery for Willie. A mere twenty-five years or so had perhaps less chemical significance for him than for any other man alive. His imaginative grasp of time or evolution was an irreducible minimum. In a mechanical way he had expected a changed Minna Krowes, of course. What he had not expected, or at least projected,

was the actual Princess de Pacelli—she of the two widowhoods, designated betimes by the vulgar as grass and sod.

Ushered with simplest of formality into a sitting-room he noted the table, already laid *à deux*. He was kept waiting alone a scant three minutes. The Princess appeared in a doorway opposite the gas logs, parting the pale green curtains that characterized this hotel. Her eyes fell on Willie. Forthwith she was radiant—but not with any radiance he had been capable of anticipating, even remotely.

No souvenir of Minna Krowes had been enough tinged with his flair for sentimentality to prevent her being, in the last analysis, a sort of joke on his memory. Romance had apotheosized the joke, to be sure. J. Bradley Krowes' millions, flowering into her rocket-like ascension, had played into the actor's destiny. He could not but accredit her, as protagonist. But no flavour of that exhaustively published affair had been richer for him than his sense of a tongue in his cheek; Romeo, secret satirist, mooning his dithyrambs to Juliet for the public ear.

The hold of the story on popular interest, or tolerance, had been extraordinary. Syndicated interviews, cropping out like garden weeds, had quoted year after year Willie's alleged admission, debonnairly pensive: "Yes, it *was* pretty hard on me, of course—but I guess it was even harder on poor Minna. No—I shall probably never marry. There are things, you know, that knock the matrimonial idea clean out of a fellow."

In the ominous three minutes while he awaited her entrance these interviews were in his mind. Had she ever seen any of them? Had the half-tones of himself linked to half-tones of herself with chains of broken hearts, drawn by a staff artist in the Sunday supplement from Buffalo, or Des Moines, or St. Paul, ever by chance found a way into the old châteaux of the Montfauçons—or across the long-dried castle moats of the Pacellis?

Anyhow, he had never paid a penny to a press agent for any of them. That was unction to his not quite easy conscience. There is a certain type of fantasia for which, in normal times, the grotesquely inflated American newspaper will always throw wide its watered spaces.

The pose of renunciation, for public consumption, which sent thousands of women year after year to any play in which he might be, had become second nature. And second nature with the actor is all of nature—like the part that is played until it gets into the blood. He had in the end been most false to himself when he had been most candid with himself about Minna. He had been false to himself in an inability to forget the comedy—her great, moist-hungry eyes, devouring him—her rickety thinness, not then the fashion—the big, loose-flapping hats that had emphasized her likeness to an Easter egg. By the same artifice which had worked, in the depths of his heart, his idealization of the adventure, he should have idealized Minna herself. She had deserved as much.

It was his cynicism of her, the false note in his souvenirs of the episode, that smote him now to humility.

Behind the Princess de Pacelli the pale green curtains fell back into place. She moved toward him. She lifted her face, crowned with piled snow-white hair, veiled of eyelids. Oh, the wasted years of his misconception! He sank to depths that were the lowest. Could he have but guessed she would one day be like this! His cumulative sense of renunciation might then have touched the spheres. As it was, he had crawled along the earth in febrile complacency of having renounced what it would have persecuted him to keep. Oh, thrice a fool to have reconstrued, yet failed to forecast her!

Like the habitat she had chosen, there was asceticism in the straight, long lines of her Paquin tunic, velvet and so dark a green it might be black. Somewhere about the medieval square-cut neck a single emerald broke the gracile austerity. The Princess de Pacelli had re-

suscitated a modernly forgotten trick of gliding slowly in the spaces of a room, as though under some impulsion from within. Willie had thought the trick had died with the aging of Sarah Bernhardt.

Yet even these visual aspects were as nothing. The reality was her voice—when she spoke. His first shock, indeed, had come two hours earlier when someone other than herself had officiated for her on the telephone. Her secretary, a demoiselle of intrepid English, had made the dinner arrangement. The formality of a proxy had disconcerted him.

By temperament Willie was neither the detached observer nor the analyst. He did not know that not in the Faubourg had the Princess acquired that voice. There the speech of aristocracy has an edge—at least for intruders. It is cracked and cackly with faded inhibitions. Her voice was a mellow monotone, infinitely enveloping, with a suggestion of warm cadence, like a chant. He could not realize that in her the dramatic instinct had ever been uppermost—had even accounted for her crass pursuit of himself in the crudity of her adolescence.

Himself an actor, he was by this very fact the last to have perceived that his own profession had been a determining factor in what she was to-day. To him she was simply a miracle of transformation into the type of her rank; to be accounted for only by dizzying reactions to the inbreeding wherewith she had been surrounded.

The explanation would have been too simple for him—himself an actor. She was reflex of the Comédie Française, the Odéon, and the various theatres which, in her disguise of a wealthy and titled patroness, she had haunted. She was the conscientious graduate of a schooling she had imposed upon herself, representing ideals personal to herself. She deserved certificates, diplomas, Latin letters at the end of her name. A like degree of application in any recognized pursuit would have brought them all to her.

But Willie did not suspect that. He would never suspect it. The unreal are not cynics of realism.

They ate together of food so excellent that it seemed inexplicable and drank of wine not selected from the hotel wine list.

She appeared to talk archly and constantly, yet managed to draw from him the story of his chain of success. He told her much about himself. He came to, with a twinge. He was talking with a Princess, and she featured herself not at all.

She perceived the twinge. Somehow she eased him over it. Before long he had replaced the tale of what he had done in seasons past with the more animated tale of what he planned to do in seasons to come.

"Ah," she cried suddenly, "I made no mistake!"

He stared wordless; for the speech was a sudden irruption. She had, however, calculated the moment for it.

"All that I have thought of you for over twenty years as being—you are!" she went on. "And more! I made no mistake."

He was startled into elemental candour.

"You say that, Princess de Pacelli? You, who well know I'm just the regulation actor-chap—that in the matter of Minna Krowes I was rather more of a cad than that!"

"An immortal cad!" he brooded on.

"Immortal, yes!—a cad, no! Minna Krowes was not ready for you. She knew she was not, somehow—even at the time. *Q'est-ce que vous voudrez?* A gawk of a girl, with thousand-dollar bills in her portmonnaie, sending moss-roses to your dressing-room with emerald scarf pins hidden in the buds. No doubt you are remembering that you made a joke of the colour at your club. *Rien de tous!* She let her coupé wait at your stage-door, confident you would slip out—*par un autre egress.* It was her discipline—her form of penance—knowing you were immortal . . ."

She would not now permit him to in-

terrupt. He had had his say. She was having hers.

"One day—Apollo stopped. He came from the stage-door—paused—introduced himself—thanked her. Nothing could exceed her consternation. So often had she of the votive gifts bidden Apollo do that—the hymnal transport of a priestess pleading for a presence she knows will be withheld—pleading the approach of a glory she knows she may not endure. She seemed to feel the roar of a toppling image—ready to fall and crush her.

"She drove you back to your lodgings. On the way, you gave her back all the scarf pins—all her many letters. In some of them were little flat golden hearts, traced with diamonds or pearls. Each had been replaced between the written pages.

"You left her—tipping your hat—thanking her again. Apollo's image had not fallen. He had granted the miracle, and she had singed in the glare. But it was the singeing of a god—and in it was the exaltation of his priestess. You had given Minna Krowes a future—you had made her. Ah, she seemed a fool—poor Minna Krowes! But her wisdom had the soundless depth of beatitude. She seemed a fool—even thought herself a fool—and not one thing she did was other than inspiration."

The Princess de Pacelli paused.

She raised a tapering attenuated hand and absently traced the line of contact of her snowy hair with her forehead.

Then, letting the arm sink diagonally across her breast, the fingers stroked her shoulder musingly. She had spoken.

Willie sat looking at her. Icarus? Hyacinthus? Not a trace. He might have been a man of fifty, with the grind of a century in his heart.

When he essayed to answer after a long silence, his voice sounded dry, laboured. At times when it rose, there was something in it premonitory of a crack.

"And so," he began, "you've lived with a tradition of chivalry—breathed it into your being—and now, after twenty years, you've come to persuade yourself that I am not a cad—congenitally, fundamentally, and by force of environment, circumstance, and tradition. The process by which you persuade yourself is beyond me. As we say in this country, I don't get you, Princess de Pacelli. The thing is all involved and elusive—sort of all balled up—and though I'm a case-hardened juvenile actor, I'm not feminine enough to understand. I suppose it would class up with transcendentalism, or something like that. But you've set a hard task for me. I've got to do over again just what I did twenty years ago."

He awaited some word from her. But she seemed of no mind to interrupt. The Princess de Pacelli drank him in with moist bright eyes that called aloud her identity with Minna Krowes.

He resumed by another laboured effort.

"One reason for you thinking I'm not a cad is that you're not in possession of all the facts. It's up to me now to give them to you. You've reasoned it out, somehow, that giving you back those letters and that jewellery was a fine thing done intuitively, as fine things are done, no doubt, by your Marquises and Counts and Princes, and fellows who get it all easily from centuries back—"

The Princess leaned forward. "It was a fine thing. You were fine—you are fine!"

He made no sign of having heard. "And even that, good as it may have looked, was no good. It was all doped out. I liked myself, just as I like myself in a part when I like it. But that's not the worst by any means—"

He had to give up for a time. He took breath and pressed on.

"The worst is simply this: Before giving you back those letters I had been persuaded to give Dolingstone a very leisurely peep at them; you know Dolingstone?—the man who printed the story in that edition of his weekly bought up by your father.

"You may be ready to condone even that. You may get one of those strange, women's angles in the matter and reason it out that it didn't harm you in the long run—that it practically set you right—put you in the gear of high soaring, as the best insurance against wayside mud. And from that you'll come to convincing yourself that I foresaw all this *in the chivalrous spirit*—that I showed Dolingstone the letters through the loftiest, most self-abnegating desire to make you soar."

She arose from her chair; moved toward him.

"But I knew that you had shown him the letters," she cried out. "My father told me. What else could you do—oh, my Apollo—to save me from myself?"

Willie sighed a weary sigh. He had known it would be hard. But he had not pictured how hard it would be.

"I did something else," he said draggingly.

She awaited, her hands still seeming to flutter near his shoulders.

"Dolingstone offered me money. I took it."

She was behind him now, as if to evade the torture in his eyes. She was behind him, a supple, hovering shadowiness, felt but not seen. In the Saxon curliness of his hair, fingers toyed as in a benediction. From above him came the spent murmur of her voice; that voice, modelled by her through years of unflagging patience, after the greatest rhapsodical tragedienne of a passing generation:

"The jewels—you gave them back—Dolingstone's lean bribes did not exact that you go that far. And you were poor—slaving at eight performances a week—stock company toil—the wheel of Sisyphus! What also of all the gold you might have drawn from Minna with her thousand-dollar bills in her portmonnaie—as the sun draws drops from the ocean—unconcerned—irresponsible? My father told me that Dolingstone gave you money. He told me—"

A harsh laugh breaking from Edgerton interrupted her.

"And did he tell you the rest?" he half shrieked. "Did he tell you that Dolingstone went to him with photographs of Minna's letters—full-sized duplicates—made with my consent? For all I know they may exist to-day—eternal guarantees against libel suits from the Princess de Pacelli and her heirs! Did he tell you of the money—the *real* money that I accepted from 'papa' himself—in exchange for a written guarantee—to spurn and shun his too susceptible daughter? Eight performances a week? Wheels of Sisyphus? It is to laugh—as we used to say at the club. For five years after that I did no work. I put myself luxuriously through college. Too many actors are illiterate under their veneer. I was ambitious, Princess de Pacelli."

His voice had sunk. He was again master of himself. A quiet insouciance enfolded his manner. Years fell from him, like the burden he had unloaded. He was debonnairly boyish again.

"I was ambitious," he repeated. "It is my single virtue—my single plea of extenuation. I wanted an education. God, how I wanted it! I took Krowes' money, spared his daughter the contamination of further acquaintance, and put myself through college."

She hovered still behind him. He could hear her weeping softly. The hands no longer played in benediction about his blonde head.

"After I got my A.B.," he concluded, "there was still some money left. As a man of one more year's superfluous means, I could afford to accept Mrs. Blackman Durand's invitation to amble and loiter round the world with her in her yacht. That was the way I spent the fifth year of my vacation."

At five o'clock the next afternoon—the exact moment when Willie, fresh from bath, breakfast, and massage, sauntered from the elevator into the lobby of The Thespians—Buttons approached him.

"Telephone for you, sir—the Princess de Pacelli. Shall we say you are in, sir?"

Willie allowed himself a moment of

cogitation. Invention exacts thought. When he did reply it was with deliberate care:

"Tell the Princess de Pacelli's secretary—it is she on the 'phone, not the Princess—that Mr. Edgerton has been unexpectedly called out on location for a picture that is being filmed in Alaska."

CHAPTER V

By preference Willie sat alone that night in the most obscure corner of the grill. He ordered his favourite long silver fizzes. Now and then he smoked one-quarter of a fresh cigarette. He mused.

His meditations were centralized. They clustered about a most cleanly conscience, as a sermon about a text. His mind was in an ordered state, with the human and quite justifiable touch of heightened self-respect, to soothe such worries as might well beset him.

"And so, for the second time in my life"—this was his text—"I have lied right lustily, and blackened my character—to save a too generous girl from herself—and—to save my freedom for myself."

He had to make the final admission; though it took the edge off his martyrdom.

From this text branched out the little tangents of reflection. It had been much easier twenty years ago. Then the lying and the character blackening required no direct action. They merely had to be left to the inference of all persons directly concerned.

Yes—decidedly it had been harder last night. No mere inference had sufficed—for the Princess de Pacelli. Her amazing mental slant had exacted lies straight from the shoulder. He had stood under a tilted bucket of tar, of his own impromptu necromancy.

"Cracking good actor as I always am, I was never greater than last night—yet it has taken her just twenty-four sleepless hours to get wise. She divines the truth that I was simply and spectacularly lying. She calls me up. Good God! How intuitive women are!"

But he could not do it all over again. He must see her no more. His strength was spent. Confronted with her plain accusation that he had blackened himself in falsifying himself, he was pretty certain he would break down. Inevitably and inexorably she would probe the truth—that as far as she was concerned his long-ago had been rather amazingly decent—in the fundamentals, anyhow. Old Krowes' money to go through college with? Angels might have laughed at that—or wept. To be sure, Dolingstone's sheet had never ceased to publish it—by innuendo—as a fact established.

Nor had he especially cared. As press stuff it hadn't been bad. It was far more pictorial than the sordid truth it concealed—the prosaic truth of how he had sweated to save that college money—living in a boarding house in the Forties (necks had been craned from windows when Minna Krowes' coupé drove him homeward)—working through long, hot summers in towns of seventy-five thousand inhabitants, twelve performances a week, and another play every seven days.

Then that year aboard Mrs. Blackman Durand's yacht—the Sabbatical year, so to speak. Willie took a cool, fresh nip of silver fizz and laughed to himself—the bright, serene chuckle of the frank Dionysiac. That, too, had been another story.

These were indeed thoughts to make Willie forget his worries.

The worries were there, however—little hair-legged glooms—cluttering the offing.

Yesterday he had telephoned down for the club barber's masseur, for instance. His Japanese boy was indeed on a vacation. It was a vacation of indefinite duress. The caustic, realistic reader has observed that he had no bath attached to his room, and no doubt laid it to the author's ignorance of the manner in which luxurious public idols live at their clubs. Be not

hasty. There are graded room-mates at clubs as well as at hotels.

Willie's little place in Westchester was also mortgaged to the hub. He had leased it out for a year, with every precious book, picture and *objet d'art* he owned in the world, exactly as when occupied by himself. Even storage expense is an item sometimes to be avoided.

The tragedy of Willie was unique, though not unprecedented. Out of the heavens a new Jerusalem of gold-paved streets had descended. Its foundations were garnished with jasper and chrysolite and beryl; and a winged seraph with a trumpet, like unto the voice of ten thousand newspapers, called through the glittering vaults of space; lo! the Kingdom of the Camera is at hand!

Less apocalyptically put, Willie just missed being rich beyond the dreams of avarice by being born a shade too early—a shade unmistakably registered by the merciless scrutiny of the close-up. Had the New Jerusalem of Moviedom but revealed a gleam of the glitter so soon to be vouchsafed to chosen ones, even as late as the year 1910—but why harry the might-have-been! It was now 1916—and the auriferous canonizations, setting in about the year 1913, were not for such as Willie. Obscure juveniles, who might not have touched the hem of his garment had he been their contemporary, strutted in photographic tailoring through the twelve gates of pearl on to the streets of gold. Willie had just passed beyond the password.

His tragedy was, therefore, that of any man or woman whose hold on the stage rested in physical beauty, and whose physical zenith was at the dawn of the twentieth century instead of twelve or fifteen years later. There are but a few of them.

Willie had duly appeared in the movies, to be sure. What actor has not? But alas, he had had to work for a salary—not for a contractual arrangement conferring the touch of Midas by competitive incantation. When they began asking him to play youthful fathers of glorious camera heroes, recruited from chorus men, something within him shied—as at a spectre. Vaudeville looked preferable—tabloid versions of himself as he had been. . . . Mirage again! . . .

Even to acceptance of the camera fathers had he come at last, however, at the time of the Princess' return.

"A man must live" is the ritualistic bromide for Gethsemanes of the soul.

The last silver fizz this evening no longer laved his self-felicitation. The glooms were on-pressing hordes. His sword arm was faltering.

"It will take me out of town at any rate," he told himself by way of the last feint of a thrust. "If I remain here, refusing to play lens-papa to René Slap-My-Wrist, the Princess will not only surely find me—she will discover that I am broke!"

And, sombrely yawning, he arose and sauntered toward a carnival group of clubmen across the grill, where, being stormily welcomed, he was assisted to forget.

CHAPTER VI

So passed the first crucial test of that period in Willie's life which certain psychoanalysts have held to be more dangerous for men than for women.

Then, in the following Spring, came Irene Trowbridge.

Forsaking her Surrey villa with its rose gardens, now turned into a hospital for war convalescents; forsaking also her statuesque recruiting poses in Trafalgar, she came over to visit briefly her native land. She came over in a diamond-striped ship painted like a lizard, which, like a lizard, seemed to dart hither and yon, evading submarine weazles as it progressed. Irene enjoyed it, with the lustiness of sensorial capacities unjaded by the cataclysm which had diverted her so limitlessly.

The beauteous giantess had never quite given up the stage; just as poor old Vic Stratton, her erstwhile husband, had never quite surrendered his mortal

coil. There was indeed a parallel in the two instances. In his wheel-chair in a private sanatorium overlooking the Hudson, Vic had stoutly asserted a long lease on life, and planned marvellous ventures for the future when his wheel-chair should be rid of him.

Equally stoutly had Irene stood by her pose of professional activity. She had staged herself in fully three London productions during the past dozen years, all of them of brief tenure. She meant to work regularly as soon as the war should be over. Every once in a while her purchase of some play for her future use found announcement space most miraculously in the Paris journals. . . . When a Paris poet or musician turns Poilu, he goes on composing in the trenches. The sales price may be cheap; but *Figaro* will mention the achievement.

For the rest, Irene's dozen years had not been empty. They had started out right, with intimate seedlings of success left by distinction's winnowing fan. An Emperor had entertained her aboard his yacht. He was destined to be deposed, as well as much hated, by the country of her adoption. But at the time of the conferred distinction nothing more propitious for British social success could have descended upon her. Then another Kaiser, but this time of the money world, had given her a theatre all her own. The cream of England's aristocracy adored her. Irene managed to hurl the Super-Woman into the teeth of the scowling brood of Nietzsche. With her recruiting work, her patronage of the sputtering torch of French literature, her marvellously administered Convalescent Hospital in Surrey, she was all but the Anglo-Saxon Answer.

When she arrived in America she paid Willie a surprising compliment. She sent for him. It was almost a royal summons.

Irene's idea of war-time unpretentiousness differed essentially from the Princess de Pacelli's. She had taken, entire, the Vanterlings' house, in the East Seventies, a half-square from the Avenue; a quiet, flat-fronted structure of pale graystone. It had stood empty, with all its gorgeous interior trappings, for two years now. All the women of the Vanterling dynasty were in Paris working for widows or soldiers or orphans. Irene had met them all. Very probably she refused to accept a few weeks' use of it for nothing, and so got it for a song, together with the addresses of a half-dozen excellent servants. Trust Irene.

The summons came to Willie in a note written on paper as thick as parchment, bearing Irene's specially designed coat-of-arms, and delivered at The Thespians, personally, by her butler.

DEAR WILLIE EDGERTON:

You cannot be still angry with me. When the play, which had always of course been your *play, failed in London, you had your revenge. I knew you were bitter toward me. But there were reasons, old dear, why I would not take you to London. And there are other things to put forgiveness in your heart—if this terrible war hasn't already done so. Dine with me tonight. If there is some other engagement, you must break it. I know all about the fragility of* your "*other engagements.*"

IRENE.

Willie read the note by the light of a noonday sunbeam which fell through the upper part of The Thespians window across the little bed. The sunbeam burnished his curly hair to warm amber. But his smile was as frosty at the close-cropped areas about his ears.

"'Reasons why *I* would not take you to London'!" He sniffed. "She won't even call it 'we.' And poor old Vic lifted her out of a stock company in Winnipeg."

Needless to add, he accepted the invitation with feverish alacrity; with something approaching genuine excitement.

"*I'll be on hand, W.E.,*" he scrawled on a sheet of club paper which he sent by her awaiting butler. He had another positive engagement. But Irene

had been on sure ground as to all that sort of thing.

Yet nothing in the universe of lesser proportions than Irene could have dynamited the earlier arrangement. It was with Mrs. Blackman Durand. She also had returned to New York from some one of her esoteric sojourns in the Orient.

Willie was now forty-seven. He was unmistakably breaking in health, if not invariably in appearance. Doctors had striven to interdict even such innocuous solaces as silver fizzes. They had interdicted just about everything Willie liked best to do, in terms of Mortality and Nemesis. Every congenital instinct, or life-habit, was banned. They were directing him to imitate being dead in order to keep moribundly alive.

How the zest of prospective encounter with Irene put new life in his veins! When he entered the grill before summoning a taxi, around six in the evening, he was noted. Bill Mackett caught him by the shoulders, turned him under the full rays of a ceiling globe and inspected him as if he were a newly scoured coin.

"What's the Radiant Thought, Willie? Just run into a war baby or something?"

"Something like that," replied Willie. "No—no cocktails, thanks. We've all got to taper down toward national prohibition."

"That fellow," said Mackett, as Willie dodged and ducked from the group, "must be near fifty. And he still looks like a fresh-minted million."

"Sometimes!" grunted one or two under their breath. But most of them were heartily agreed.

Willie had indeed dropped fifteen years. For an hour or two, anyhow. Irene herself wasn't ready for him. Various persons had told her that Willie—but they calumniated good-looking men just as they did beautiful women! So many persons delight in muddying the fountain of youth by stirring up the enumeration of years at its bottom.

Not the least of her reasons for returning to America had been an article in a weekly paper which wrote of her as if she had belonged to a generation of grandmothers. The house in the East Seventies had that morning sheltered a great drawing-roomful of interviewers who could see for themselves.

She made a feint of pretending that Willie had outdone her.

"I hate you, Willie Edgerton," she exclaimed as he entered. "How do you do it?"

"Stop kidding!" returned Willie.

He had been ushered to her in the Vanterling library. It was a room like the inside of a monstrous ruby. Luminous crimson bathed all its contours with a glow that seemed alive. The books were deep shadows, in alcoves high arched, about the central patio. In a huge fireplace real logs burned genuinely, with grotesque affectation of the archaic or the elemental. It had been a marrow-chilling March. He had interrupted her in the seemingly serious business of warming her hands, most pictorially. The fingers that were not extended toward Willie then patted the head of a staghound which had arisen from the porphyrial hearth and snuggled beside her. She had timed the act to the exact minute of her guest's appearance. Trust Irene.

She moved about, not caring to sit, followed by the dog. A servant wheeled in a bus, and she mixed a shaker of cocktails with efficiency, energy and statuesque grace. Willie did not omit the usual reference.

"Just the same," he added from the depth of his Venetian throne chair. "Juno playing at Hebe!"

"I have thought it would be jolly if we had our little meal together, right in here, in front of the fire."

"You know!" she added in a moment, pouring the cocktails. "*A deux!*"

"I know," admitted Willie.

CHAPTER VII

"And now," she said, when the dinner things had been cleared away, "you've heard nearly everything I have to tell you about myself."

She had indeed covered an astonishing number of personal triumphs in the space of an hour's dilatory nibbling at very solid and English food. In these hypothetically conclusive words was, however, an effect of her having hardly started.

"You're a dear," she went on. "You understand women. You know that all they ask of a man is to let them talk."

Willie had heard the same profundity in exact reversal. The sex of sophistry is interchangeable.

"And I haven't touched upon any of the things I most wanted to discuss."

He had known that was coming. He drew the liqueur bottle closer; made ready for another hour of Elysian attentiveness.

"Willie Edgerton—you never suspected several things in those two or three years when you were the star ex-officio of the Irene Trowbridge and Vic Stratton joint starring venture. You never suspected, for instance, that I was in love with you."

"No!" exclaimed Willie, and sipped at a refilled thimbleful.

"Or, if you did suspect it," wavered Irene, "you kept it pretty well hidden. That was my real reason for canning you for London. Hell hath no fury—and so forth."

"And how about poor Vic?" Willie spoke softly. "He was mad about you."

"Why waste that tender tone on old Vic Stratton. Being married to him made a woman feel just like a harem."

Willie nodded, sipping again. "I get you. A sort of compound entity. A hundred ideals, blonde, brunette, petite, statuesque, feminine, super-feminine, and ultra-super-feminine merged into one orgy of infatuation. And all of it simply in poor Vic's questing brain."

He concluded after a silence: "I suppose it *was* trying for every one of the women on whom his lightning fell. It would be."

"Exactly. A woman doesn't mind a man's philandering—"

"Call it universalizing," interrupted Willie. "Vic was a big man."

"Call it what you like. I don't mind a man's being in love, from the day he was born, with every woman alive. But when he concentrates his ardours for every woman alive on one woman, and that woman happens to be oneself, it's—it's hell."

She indulged herself in this sort of use of the word after a slight hesitation. The past several years had trained her to hesitancies as to when not to say such things. The habit tugged now and then, even in the free-as-air professionalism of this tête-à-tête with a fellow actor.

"It was Vic's misfortune," said Willie musingly, "to love one woman, and one only, at a time—to cleave to her—worship her—apotheosize her and—create her! When his lightning chanced to strike it was a vitalizing current—blasting almost any chance petticoated creature into fame—fortune—glory!"

"Willie—you're rude."

"More'n rude," agreed Willie. "Raw! Women prate of '*noblesse oblige*' and know but a single law: '*Moi—je m'oblige.*' That trick was too easy with Vic. All the chance Petticoat—apotheosized—had to do was to decide on the safe moment, get his back bowed, spring from it into the saddle. A man bows his back, even lies on his belly, when he feels lonesome. Flop up and fly! Mazeppa stuff. It's so easy, Irene, to goad a man into feeling lonesome when he loves a million women in one. You don't have to do anything—just let the monogamous harem get so draughty that the Pasha shivers. Sit back and let him do the rest. He'll fall automatically—as the woman always knows. You did better, whiter, by Vic than either of your successors. I'll grant you that. You merely galloped off. The last two kicked him from under."

Irene was regarding him with the fixity of glorious, shadowy eyes.

"You're a staunch, loyal friend, Willie," she said, with the hint of a thrust. "Would that he had been as staunch and as loyal—to you!"

"He made me," returned Willie, simply. "I owe all the successes I've ever had to Vic. I can always bring him

that bouquet, anyhow, when I drop in and try to cheer him up—over there."

He made a vague gesture in the direction of the Hudson River. Before his mind rose the picture—grassy terraces, and Vic in his wheeled chair, clutching with the unparalyzed hand to detain the visiting friend while he further outlined large schemes for the future.

"He didn't stand by you on the London venture, Willie. I had no real power to prevent your going, you know."

"Oh, yes you did. More! You had the real power to prevent Vic's going himself—if you'd desired it. You even deliberated upon it—didn't you? Confess! He was within an ace of sending you—trusting through fulfilment of any wish of yours to be less lonesome. But you were wise, Irene, old dear. You made careful calculations. You weren't quite ready to go alone."

"Willie," said Irene, and there was the flutter of a tremble for once unintentional in her voice, "if I had elected to go alone—you well know it would not have been alone. You—would have gone with me. We would have electrified London!"

"Steady!" admonished Willie. "Even two arc lamps of our class don't make a buzz sign. There's got to be a dynamo somewhere."

"He would have done it—for me."

"He offered to," said Willie bluntly. "That's the immortal pathos of the thing. He came to me, in secret, and suggested it. His only longing was to do anything that would gratify you—make warmer the chilled spaces of your heart."

Unquestionably it was merciless of Willie. The beautiful Irene was no longer a carven statue. For an instant she forgot to manipulate the levers of her persistent and aggressive vitality. She looked a great white mummy, with painted mouth.

Willie leaned toward her, speaking softly:

"And he never for an instant doped it out that I was the very last man to trust in such an arrangement. He believed he would be safe with me. None are so unsuspecting as those whom the world calls roués."

So they remained good friends—professional pals. Willie even persuaded her to visit Vic in his wheel-chair at the sanatorium on the Palisades. They went together; and on their way up the Hudson she admitted that she had come to America with broad plans for Willie's own rehabilitation.

Among the plays she had purchased (at war bargain rates) was one cut as if to William Orpen Edgerton's measure—an accidental fit for him, so exact as to smack of the miraculous. She had meant to present him to London. Not with herself opposite. No, no. She was too large. Merely her production. Certain American players were braving the air raids with fabulous showers of gold rewarding their courage. She was sure Willie's light was also of a calibre to pierce the pall. And the prestige she could throw about him! And the patronage she could swing toward him!

But Willie was a simon-pure coward. He assured her of it in a manner that left no room for doubt. He'd desert the Prince of Wales in a stage box, he said, in the climax of his biggest scene, at the first faint echo of a Zeppelin's snort. What she must do was to invest the sum she had meant to risk on himself in security for poor Vic, who was at present being looked after precariously by small donations. They were collected from time to time among several old friends, some of them none too prosperous. He reasoned that such security legitimately belonged to Vic, if only on a commission basis. Irene saw the point.

Thus, though Irene became a mirage, the London season he had missed fifteen years earlier did not.

But the third and last mirage had come upon him, all but simultaneously with the drifting glory of Irene.

Mrs. Blackman Durand. . . .

CHAPTER VIII

She was very angry when he broke his engagement the night of Irene's invitation, though he telephoned apologies next day. He broke up his best sleep at noon to explain to her how he had been unfortunately detained out on location, on a motion picture being filmed in remotest Long Island.

Mrs. Durand was sure he lied. She swallowed her resentment as a gunner swallows irritation at a buck easily frightened off. She sympathized with him on the telephone. The ill-luck which had kept him at midnight in a sandy, fish-smelling wilderness in the neighbourhood of Quogue deserved forgiveness, she told him—and compensation. She had definitely made other plans for to-night, but she'd cancel them and play the Samaritan to the overworked movie actor. He should be confronted with wine and food.

Willie wouldn't hear of it. She must break no engagement on his account. He would convalesce from Quogue somehow or other.

There was much interlocution of this sort, with Willie's interrupted pillow calling aloud, out of range of the receiver. They found a mutually open evening three nights later.

Already since Mrs. Blackman Durand's return they had met once or twice. She had driven to the club and motored Willie halfway across the state and back, as it seemed to him. (The habit of world-girdling in her struck him as persistent.) She had also induced him to meet her at Boué Sœurs one afternoon, for the purpose of censoring a half-dozen daring creations on Oriental lines. Willie didn't tell her they wouldn't do in war-time, though she had been afraid he might. For all her newspaper notoriety, Mrs. Durand was a very private woman. Her sessions were essentially closed sessions. It really didn't matter. He made her heart glad by encouraging her to buy them.

Society heard of her. It saw her only when she was pointed out. Such is the penalty, and the reward, of having lived one's own life in one's own way—without being a prima donna.

As for Mrs. Blackman Durand, it is doubtful if she visualized society in any way concrete enough to make it existent for her. Her scheme of relativities was her own. Naturalists declare that there are certain animals whose optic equipment alters the whole scheme of reception on the retina so that they see things upside down, or endwise foremost, or notched when they are smooth, or curved when they are planed. Always, of course, on the unproved and unwarranted assumption of standardized normal vision, which records things as they are. Science fails to consider the ophthalmic mode of its divergences.

Mrs. Blackman Durand was under no exaction to look into the orthodox diagnosis which would label her freakish. She fulfilled her own necessities, nor came a cropper on any of the laws she seemed to break. Automatically she was self-preservative. The degree of her ability to survive and surmount made conservatism look like sickly annihilation.

She was, for instance, a most excellent business woman—keen, efficient, crafty. Amid her deliberate emulation of the Arabian Nights, she had found time, somehow, to double or treble a fortune, partly inherited, partly left her by Blackman Durand, a first husband who had promptly died.

Several succeeding husbands who had not died had yet faded out, without accomplishing the feats of financial extraction they had doubtless intended. Their very names had faded with them, leaving the advertising solely to the first-mourned. All proving that infatuation is not always an incinerator. Mrs. Blackman Durand had no doubt divided herself into zones. Her danger zone of susceptibility was quarantined off.

Willie dined with her in the house in Fifty-ninth Street, reopened after being boarded up eight or nine years. It overlooked the Park, but had not other distinction, its Walpurgis and Brockenberg surprises being all inside.

The ground floor was a stone court, with fountains and stone seats, statues and round pools, bordered with dwarf olives, miniature cypresses and figs and lemon trees like an exterior. There was even an open loggia at the back, dropping upon a brief turf and marble terrace, with an arrangement of striped awnings so clever that surrounding cliffs of apartments, hotels, and lofts were all but cut off. At any rate, you forgot them. Manhattan was three-fifths 'round the globe way.

They had their dinner a flight of stone steps above all this, in a Moorish vastness of deafening old rose, amber and peacock; reclining, of course, among cushions, alongside little lone teakwood tables. Mrs. Blackman Durand reacted to the conventional life in terms of the persecution of chairs. She hated them, as she hated clothes. Truly and at last an individualist. The dinner was *à deux*, but they had a teakwood table apiece.

Part of the time between sweetmeats, odd powdery dried substances and like exotics of dubious caloric voltage, she spent showing him her more recent collection of jewels. The food didn't matter anyhow. Willie had known that it wouldn't.

After the weird *apératif*, with its "kick" cloudily impearled in the most kinetic sugariness Willie had ever tasted—and his record was not negligible—the champagne was conservative enough. It had race, as well as class. Like some blonde patrician beauty, it was paradoxically blue-blooded. When you whiled away a tangible pipe dream with Mrs. Blackman Durand, only the wine counted. It balanced the score of the fourth-dimension menu with a surplusage.

"This Ikon of diamonds, and these three strings of pearls," expounded Mrs. Durand, holding them before Willie's blinking but complacent eyes, "were given me by poor Narodnovitch. That was his assumed name for private sociability, you know. He foresaw the revolution. He said I might as well have them. If I didn't, the Reds would find and wear 'em, with strings of glass beads when they went to their compulsory Beethoven concerts."

"Clever of him," admitted Willie unsteadily.

"An Inca is never so much an Inca as when he's incog.," nodded the reclining lady of fifty. "I met him always at Louise Beratini's—idol of the old St. Petersburg Opera—shot, they say, trying to escape as a peasant."

"I saw her once," mused Willie. "In Paris. Some dancer!"

His active reaction to romance had evoked the divinest tragic melancholy. Epicureanism can go no farther. At last, and after a lifetime, the Perfect Dinner!

"These emeralds—"

She held one of them up between her thumb and forefinger.

"They make a noise," interrupted Willie, "like a cross current on an induction coil. Szz-szz-buzz! So!"

"The Swami of Cherra Punji gave them to me! But only one at a time—mark you that—only one at a time! He lives privately a thousand miles from any of their cities, in his palace, with his hundred beautiful Nautch girls—a misanthrope embittered by the degradation of his lost power. They chant dirges in all his mosques when the tax collector comes around—not the money, you know—the humiliation. He had arranged my reception in advance. I was carried in to him, half-swooning, on a litter of pink jasmine flowers. They laid me at his feet. I looked up into his eyes. But he did not summon me to a place at his side. Oh, no! Every inch a Swami—last scion of a line going back more thousands of years than he had wives! He merely met my eyes with that far-off dreaminess they all have—all those Swamian demi-gods—and signalled his Nautch girls to dance. Their brown bodies flashed in and out among the flowers and jetty sprays of falling water. The throne room was partly open, with a deep green pool, under the green dome—"

"Sort of pool-room," said Willie with ill-timed facetiousness.

Mrs. Durand apprehended a certain befuzzlement of his usually reliable good taste. She went on, undisturbed.

"Their dance entwined and entangled them in ropes of woven lotus buds. Then, suddenly, they would uncoil themselves and dive into the green pool and arise out of it, shaking the glistening drops from their beautiful brown bodies. Ever as they danced, their eyes were fixed on the Swami with adoration. He might have felled any one of them to the earth with his heel—and she would have smiled up at him—"

"Pity—" broke in Willie, with a touch of thickness. "Pity'sh our stage directors'sh can't find chorus girl'sh with good disposition'sh like that!"

"After a while I grew weary of watching so much loveliness. I looked up at him again—one look. He clapped his hands. They disappeared like mist—as if the tropic, lotus-scented air had absorbed them—"

"Hot air'sh," supplemented Willie, his enkindled imagination following Mrs. Durand's with perfect concord from cloud to cloud.

But Mrs. Durand was only approaching her climax.

"Then—his own eyes bade me arise. I stood before him trembling. His gaze burned through me. He opened his arms to me slowly. I hardly remember any more. I must have swooned. But when I went away he gave me the great emerald."

"But there'sh—*two* emeralds," insisted Willie.

"Ah, I'm coming to that. There was one time more. Exactly as before, only more so. He gave me the other emerald. I fled away that night. They carried my litter through the jungle moonlight, beset with snakes and tigers. All the time at the palace I had been terribly, terribly afraid. Something seemed to consume me with hot fire within and without!"

"Bad climate'sh in India," nodded Willie, earnestly. "Bad sultry climate'sh."

"I believe he would have killed me had I remained. I believe he always killed those to whom he gave the emerald. He had never before given one to a white woman."

"Good for you, old girl'sh! Too wise'sh for him! Got the emerald and beat it'sh!"

His hostess was manipulating a long, oddly shaped implement resembling a pair of curved silver reeds with an eccentric outflaring receptacle of porcelain, or possibly agate, at its base.

"Smoke a little, Willie," she advised with maternal solicitude. "My champagne's going to your head!"

It was merely one of their characteristic "parlour socials." Willie had been entertained like this by Amèlie Durand before . . . At intervals during his life . . . The last time, eight or nine years back . . .

CHAPTER IX

Mrs. Durand had not shown Willie all her jewels.

In her possession was another—of exquisite purity and beauty. She had, thus far, kept it hidden.

Little Amèlie had been born a short time after her separation from Ian Sieves, the Hebredean poet.

It had almost approached the clarity of a love-affair—that marriage with Ian. Clean-limbed, rough, with the blue of far sea-spaces in his eyes, he had looked every inch the Viking that was a salty wind in his improvisations of mist-opal ruggedness. It was said that lionizing had made him mercenary. Amèlie Durand always took, or pretended to take, the attitude that he was a poseur whom she'd outwitted. She had grown shy of mention of his name, which signified something: whether a bad conscience, or distaste, or regrets, or mere forgetfulness, who shall fathom?

There is a plea for Ian and the sorry taint of that brief marriage. A staunch yawl may drift in clean safety through blue depths, cool with icebergs, and drink the wind in its patched singing

sails. Its haven is an inlet of stilled water amid the rocks and the huts. But what if, by some caprice of passengers on an ocean liner, it be caught, bound and towed to the dry-docks of Babel? Worse yet—what if, eventually, it be carried inland and set on wheels like some pasteboard float, and garlanded with paper flowers smelling of dye and musk? You can buy it then—if you have the price.

"Little Amèlie would be just twelve years old," mused Willie on his way to Amèlie Durand's, a week or so after their first real evening together.

These "real" evenings had resumed themselves as a habit. They were indeed the easiest way.

"She's home," Amèlie senior announced to him, quite casually and by accident, some time before midnight. "I had them fetch her down from school. She is beautiful beyond dreams. For the life of me I can't pinch myself into knowing that she's mine!"

"I want to see her," said Willie.

"She's asleep," answered his hostess. "I'm following their instructions religiously. Beside her teachers, she has nurses and governesses. Enormously expensive—my little daughter. You can't say I'm neglecting my duty toward her."

"Let's see—you hadn't seen her for eight years, when you came back," calculated Willie.

"And seven months," she added.

"You are a good mother," declared Willie fervently, and meant it.

But in his mind was a misgiving.

How of the time when little Amèlie should be sixteen, seventeen? Amèlie Senior would then be fifty-four or five. A beautiful daughter at hand. A whole newly possible world of fresh and proxy excitements through the radiant lens of youth. Poor little Amèlie! He sighed, inaudibly.

"Let me see her," he demanded, with an edge in his tone.

They stood by a bed in a cool little gray-blue room. Little Amèlie's straight long hair hovered hood-wise about her sleeping face—a yellow so pale that it seemed tinged with silver, like frost-rime upon rock-saffron. Almost white was her hair. Her skin, too, was white—a warm white, iridescent as tinged snow. She had thrown the hot, blue satin coverlet from her in her sleep, and disarranged her white shift. Her long limbs, lanky with sudden childish growth, were partly uncovered. She was as exquisite as a poet's abstract conception of immaculateness.

Willie gazed long upon her. She stirred restlessly, as if with troubled dreams. Once she opened two eyes, glowing with the blue that is cold yet not cold—fathomless ice-depths imprisoning blue flame. They stared wonderingly, and closed again. She had not awakened.

"You are right," whispered Willie. "It doesn't seem possible that she's yours."

They tiptoed from the little room, closing the door softly.

Mrs. Durand wore the look that Willie had known her to wear when some casual deal on the stock market had turned out miraculous, even inspirational—as her deals so often did.

"It will be wonderful when she is grown. That will be only four or five years more. Then I can have her. She will be mine. You don't know, Willie, how lonesome I sometimes get."

"I see."

So his misgivings had been right. It would be too much to expect of an Amèlie Durand that she would remain as good a mother as she had been thus far. She had stayed away. But in a few years she would stick around.

"I shall bring her out in society when she is seventeen. I mean she shall have the most lavish début any girl ever had. She shall drink of life to the fullest."

"I see—like her mother."

"Oh, she will do better than I. She will be a beauty, you know—tall, blonde, stunning—the English type. I was never beautiful—always small, dark.

Oh, believe me, I've wept bitter tears over me!"

"The Oriental type gets by," demurred Willie, gallantly.

"Mere tricks!" His hostess snapped her fingers. "I had to learn how to distribute my parts, as it were—learn how to make myself go 'round."

"You were enormously successful," bowed Willie; and being no fool, she saw in the bow his manner of construing her admission that she'd made the maximum of her good points.

"Wretch!" she exclaimed, and joined in the laugh on herself.

But after a little she told him a strange story that happened not to be fiction.

Ian Sieves was trying to persuade her to surrender possession of the daughter. He had purchased a sizable country place in Scotland, was comfortable in means, had never remarried. He lived now a life of sequestration, sending once in a while out into the world a poem, a play.

"You know!" said Mrs. Durand. "The sort of thing they do with two or three others at matinées, or in freaky little theatres."

There was, it appeared, a legal Scotsman of title—apparently a close personal friend, who looked after Ian's ever-increasing royalties and other interests. And this titled Scotsman was in New York now, at this very moment, exerting pressure to induce her to give up the child. From his own point of view, Ian Sieves' plan was doubtless dutiful and beautiful. Teachers for his daughter would dwell under his own eye, in his house. "It seems to be a sort of restored old Highland fortress," sneered Mrs. Durand. Little Amèlie's life would be largely out of doors; her friends few but chosen. So the titled friend had presented the case.

"Wanting to bury my poor child like that—the monster!" she rattled on. "And would you believe it? The silly little thing for some reason wants to go! She has never seen her father—yet she begs me to send her!"

"The call of the blood," said Willie. But he felt his own blood pulsing strangely.

"Of course, it's explicable by her being still just a baby—they're always eager for change and novelty—aren't they? Her mental development is very slow. Sometimes I wonder if even at sixteen or seventeen she will be enough grown up to be a companion for me—a pal—helping me ward off this growing, terrifying loneliness. I can't seem to find her emotional centres!"

Willie's pulse was beating faster.

"I try to tell her of the glories of life I'm preparing, planning, exerting my imagination to invent—all for her. But, well, it simply baffles me. She wants to go. She pleads and implores to go."

"Then," said Willie, taking his first deep breath, "you must send her."

"Oh, I must, must I?"

She laughed in derision. Something in his tone got on her nerves—something presumptuous and imperative.

It came upon him, as through a roar of impending waters, that at last he faced his opportunity. In the mire, and the flood, drenched and drowning like a white rat, with all the meaninglessness of his life to justify the inundations of fate, here was the one return he could render for all the indulgence of his exemptions, all the fallowness of his shirkings! Here was the one service he could render to Eternal Right. Here was one little, white gleam of the ideal, in the vast, fetid murkiness closing in.

"You will send her."

Something ominous was in the air.

"Oh, I will—will I?"

"You will."

"One would almost think you'd managed to marry me for my money, like the others," she rasped.

He was looking at her.

"Your nerve even exceeds Ian Sieves'," she added, her heat growing apace with its vague confusions.

"You will send that little child to a clean future, and her father."

"I will do nothing of the sort," she barked, swarthy, small, rumpled, annoyed.

He arose. He stood over her. Never

had she seen him like this—him nor any other man—not even the so-called "cave men," the truckmen, the brawny sailors, the baseball heroes, the prize-fighters she had from time to time affected, in her traverse of the circle.

"Damn you—!"

Her back was to the wall. He looked a giant. She cowed, as if forfending a rain of blows.

"Rough neck!"—she tried to sneer. "Your acting's improving. Maybe you can now begin to earn something—maybe I won't have to stake you—"

Not once had he made the motion of laying hands upon her. Yet she had the sensation of his fingers closing, closing about her throat—a sense of gasping—a sense of being held under water until she should say the word demanded for her freeing.

"Bully!" she cried. "Bully! Rotter! Coward!" and collapsed into tears, pierced by little staccato noises—foiled enunciations of abuse that had the effect of shrieks stunted by a febrile will.

He waited. After a while she quieted somewhat. Knowing the crisis was over, he spoke softly:

"She is of his race—not yours. You well know that. But that is the least of the reasons why you will send little Amèlie to Ian Sieves as he asks you to do, apparently so courteously, so decently."

"And supposing I don't?" she sobbed.

"You will. It's unsupposable. If you did not—then a course would still be open. Ian Sieves would be permitted to know the full truth about you. Doubtless he knows something already—enough at any rate to make him understand whatever at the time of his separation remained inconceivable. Were you to change your mind, were you to refuse again to send little Amèlie, which you will not, then further information can be conveyed. He can be apprised to the last detail of the type of ménage into which you begin already to plan accommodations for a running partner—for the child of his loins, with his clean race touching her forehead. And I don't have to tell you what will happen when he knows—when he realizes—as he shall, unless you let him save that little girl. Damn well you know he'll hunt and find you—if he has to seek you in the ends of the world. He'll throttle you if he has to trace you in spirals among a thousand dope-dreamed Swamis and Ikon-stealing Black-Bearovitches!"

He halted, realizing that he had worked himself up over a settled matter.

"I waste energy," he said. "No need being overwrought, is there, Amèlie, old girl? We'll accompany little Amèlie to the steamer day after tomorrow. We'll see her off with our blessing. Under the circumstances I don't see how our blessing can do her any damage. It'll be as clean as we can make it, anyhow."

CHAPTER X

And it was as Willie had willed it must be.

They went to the steamer, where little Amèlie was formally surrendered for the voyage into the keeping of Ian's entrusted agent, of gravely frank eyes, youthful lineaments and strong, kindly voice, resonant with hidden courtesies beneath its half-shy detachment—Sir Steven McLaurie, barrister, litterateur and Scotsman.

Little Amèlie was introduced to this gentleman. She looked once only, but long, into his eyes. Then, contentedly, she received his affirmation that he was truly the one who was to take her to her papa; and stood, a lanky white stripling, while her mother rained kisses on her cheeks.

But when it came time to say good-bye to Willie, now an old, old friend of two long days, she clung to his hand.

"You'll come way, way over the ocean some day," she said, the blue flame leaping from its congealment in the ice of her eyes, "to see my papa and me? Won't you?"

He stooped to kiss her, and her long, straight, silvery-flaxen hair brushed his shoulders. A wisp of it caught in his scarf-pin and had to be untangled.

"Over the wide, wide ocean to see my papa and me?" she repeated.

"Both of you!" said Willie. "But you, particularly—some day."

* * * * *

Several months later Willie was found dead in a little room he had taken—pending reconstruction of his club house—at the Valenciennes, rendezvous and shelter of the playfolk and movie guild.

It was said of him that for weeks he had never drawn a sober breath. Yet they found him faultlessly groomed and dressed in his dinner jacket, ready to keep some engagement, somewhere.

Death must have overtaken him suddenly. Yet he lay in orderly fashion across the bed, as if snatching a last moment of relaxation before starting out. The fingers of his right hand were lightly touching a ring on his left.

When they found him his arms had already stiffened into this position, and no attempt was made to alter it. He was laid away for eternity, touching the ring.

An odd ring. An object of speculation among his friends. The setting was a crystal, transparent seal, a tiny oblong box of cairngorm, into which was curled a little circlet of five or six soft hairs, silvery flaxen

TREATISE ON SIMPLICITY

By T. F. Mitchell

IN proportion as a man's intelligence grows, his admiration for the simple increases, and with it his dislike for the complex. Your normal man, the man of ordinary intelligence, has just the opposite likes and dislikes. He prefers complex and intricate detective stories to stories which portray some simple aspect of life. In an art gallery he is bewitched by the multitudinous details of a meissonier or an Alma-Tadema, and has no eye for the simple colours of Corot. He likes plays full of plot, those in which the mystery isn't unravelled until the very last line. He eats in restaurants which serve dishes under French names in preference to restaurants in which the same dishes are served more cheaply under English names. He buys twelve-cylinder cars, if he can, rather than four-cylinder ones. His only partiality to the simple, instead of the complex, is along the distaff side. A pretty, simple little country girl will fetch him quicker than the super-sophisticated product of the Winter Garden. But the lapse is only a seeming one. For the simple little country girl isn't by any means as simple as she appears.

LINES

By Le Baron Cooke

THE lion hides behind the trees,
The thunder back of clouds;
Yet Love who trembles while he speaks,
Stalks boldly through the crowds.

AMY'S STORY

By Thyra Samter Winslow

I

WHEN Amy Martin was thirteen years old she read, in a book she had borrowed from the Fortnightly Library, something that interested her a great deal. She liked the thought so much that she accepted it quite thoroughly and kept it with her as a delightful secret. It was to the effect that each person's life is an interesting plot and that, if written out, it would make a fascinating story.

To Amy the idea opened up infinite avenues of adventure. Until then she had taken for granted her life in Belleville. Now, other things seemed just about to happen to her.

Amy was one of two children. Her brother Clarence was two years younger, a slow, shy, blond boy. Her father was a fat, soft fellow, with bushy reddish hair which stood up in a stiff halo from an always slightly red forehead. He had no chin at all, but he did have rather a thick neck, so that below his mouth his chin and throat formed a sagging, uneven line. He carried his head a bit high, and his prominent nostrils seemed as peering as his eyes.

Mrs. Martin was a neat, dark-haired woman, a trifle sleek and oily as to complexion and hair. She liked to spend her time mixing not particularly good cakes or talking with her neighbours, taking hours to elaborate over trifles. She liked to give the impression of being always busy, though she kept one servant and did not do much of anything.

Mr. Martin was in the retail hardware business. On the front of his store and on his letterheads he used the picture of an axe, in red, with the irrelevant motto: "It Pays to Trade at Martin's." There was only one other hardware store in Belleville, so he had quite a good trade.

The Martins lived in Myrtle Street, one of the nicest streets in Belleville. The house was of clapboards, painted a cheerful yellow with white trimmings, and had a wide porch with a scroll-work railing. The yard had several nice fruit trees and a variety of bushes placed without regard to landscaping. The house was cut up into small and not particularly attractive rooms.

At thirteen Amy was a freshman in high school and already a recognized member of Belleville's "youngest set," with dancing school Saturday afternoons, parties on Friday nights, and many Christmas-week activities. After she read that every life is an interesting story, Amy began to visualize herself as the heroine of a definite romance, still without plot, but alluring and pleasant. The thought became personal immediately. She forgot that every other life in Belleville contained a plot for a story, too. The thought seemed to belong only to her. Life stretched out, fragrant with the possibilities of living.

Crossing the street on an errand—to borrow a cup of sugar from Mrs. Oglesthorn—Amy noticed the shadow of a tree on the dusty street. She made up sentences:

"As Amy crossed the street, the sunshine and shade cast contrasting shadows on her—"

"Amy ran across the street, enjoying the warm sunlight—"

She made up frequent sentences. Why not? Wasn't she a person in a story? Wasn't anything liable to happen to her at any time? Often, after that, she thought of herself in the third person.

Amy's first year in high school was pleasant enough. She envied Luetta Corman when, in the Christmas cantata, Luetta was chosen Queen of the Good Fairies and wore white tarlatan and spangles, while Amy, as one of the Pleasant Dreams, had to be content with a silver-starred wand and pink cheesecloth. What did that matter? Later, she was going to live, to have important things happen to her. She could laugh at these little disappointments in Belleville.

The next year Amy had a real ambition. Because several people had praised her singing, she decided she had a good voice and should become a singer. The Martins had an upright and rather tinny piano, a symbol of small-town gentility, and Amy had had three years of piano lessons.

She had no talent or real love for music, and she hated to practise. She felt that learning to sing would be more pleasant than learning to play. She was rather a pretty girl, with light brown hair and indefinite blue-gray eyes. In her imagination she saw herself on the concert stage and in opera even, costumed in any of the rôles she could think of. On the stage she would find real romance.

Her vocal teacher came to her house for two half-hour lessons a week. She was not an inspired teacher, but Amy needed nothing better than Miss Patten could give. She hated scales and breathing exercises. But she sang, eagerly enough, sentimental songs. Those by Carrie Jacobs-Bond were her favourites. After six months of lessons she sang "Spring Rain" in a thin, uneven voice, noticeably weak in the lower register, at a pupils' recital. Her parents were quite proud of her.

Two months later she sang at a concert given for a local charity. On the programme was a fairly well-known visiting soprano. This woman listened to Amy's singing, and when Amy eagerly asked her opinion about "keeping on with lessons," told her truthfully, though brutally, that she could never learn to sing.

Amy gave up her singing quite willingly. She had really lost interest, anyhow. She was becoming interested in boys. She had a chum now, Lulu Brown, a dark-haired, bright-eyed girl with rather boisterous manners, and they were reaching the giggling stage. They put themselves in the way of masculine attentions, invitations to play tennis or go walking, with a soda at the Central Drug Store as an objective.

Lulu was more attractive and vivacious than Amy, but her family was not as high socially. Lulu's father was a bookkeeper. In Belleville the "society set" was composed of the families of professional men and those who owned businesses. Lulu went with the same crowd as Amy, though her parents did not go into society. Amy was fond of her, but sometimes she was ashamed of her on the street, and she was always afraid that Lulu would do something unconventional. If it had not been that boys sought Lulu's company and that Amy received many of her invitations through her chum, it is possible that she would have dropped her altogether.

The next summer Amy decided to be an artist. Three times a week, during vacation, she went to Miss Matson's "studio," the second-floor front room of the Matson home.

Miss Matson had had several years of study in New York. On the wall of her living-room there was a picture in oils that, it was said, had been done at the Art Students' League. Amy did not know just what this was, but she was impressed because of the name and because her teacher had studied in New York.

Miss Matson's students could do two kinds of work, copying pictures or still-life. If they chose copying, they made meticulous replicas of fancy heads, usually in water-colour, imitating every curve and shadow, putting on daubs of

red where the originator had put daubs of red, unquestioning. The homes in Belleville were filled with these pictures in elaborate gold frames, the work of Miss Matson's pupils. The "still-life" studies were of groups of fruit or vegetables, a yellow mixing bowl, a red tomato, and a green pepper, or, perhaps, a pitcher, two lemons, and a slice of cake.

Amy copied pictures all summer. Then someone told her that this was not art, so she joined the still-life group.

So—she was going to be an artist. She tried to see colour in everything that year. She read the lives of the painters. She knew that years of hard work lay before her, but she felt she wouldn't mind that. She knew she would do something remarkable. Life was seizing her—going to make an artist out of her. To think that her romance, her story, was coming out this way!

The next winter she went to high school and spent three afternoons a week, after school, with Miss Matson. At the end of the year she could do a "still-life study" of a couple of eggs, a mixing bowl and a bunch of radishes with fair skill. She went to parties and enjoyed them. She giggled with Lulu over the boys. But she felt that life stretched out beyond Belleville.

That summer she persuaded her father to let her go to a nearby city and take a summer course at an art school. She was only sixteen, but there were cousins with whom she could stay. Her mother and Clarence wanted to go to Benton Springs, near Belleville, where her father could go for week-ends.

Her father laughed condescendingly and told her that she could study, that he thought it would be very nice to have an artist as a daughter.

The art students were older than Amy and greatly in earnest. Amy lived near the school and worked hard. All summer she didn't pay attention to anything else. She always felt embarrassed when she met a model from the life-classes, wrapped in a bathrobe, waiting to pose. Amy was not in the life-class, but knew that drawing from the nude was all right "for art's sake." She even peeked into a life-class and pretended that she didn't mind, though she really felt that she was doing something wrong.

She attended a series of lectures and learned something about anatomy and the history of art. She even learned a little of colour and composition.

She found art a serious thing. She met men and women who had been working for five or six years—and still were doing charcoal drawings. She hated charcoal as a medium. Others spoke knowingly of schools of art and of new interpretations, and these things annoyed and puzzled her.

At the end of the term she had done half a dozen drawings from casts, three compositions and a few outdoor sketches. She had thought of art as a way to produce pretty pictures quickly. She saw how inadequate she was for such a big subject and that she lacked ability and ambition. She was glad to be back in Belleville for the opening of high school. After all, life offered many things beside music and art.

II

Amy had a good time during her junior year in high school. She and Lulu were invited to all of the Friday night parties. She was not as good a dancer as Lulu, but she always had all of her dances taken. On Sunday she and Lulu and two of the boys would go for a walk, calling at the post office for any possible mail and then stopping for sodas.

But that wasn't life. Amy wanted something above Belleville and high-school parties and a father with a hardware store with red axes on its windows. She read a great deal of fiction that year—everything in the Fortnightly Library that had large print and wide margins. While she read she remembered that, to her, too, romance would come, that her life would be an interesting story.

She fell in love with Reed Maddon

when she was seventeen. He was a tall, black-haired boy. His father kept a leather and harness store. He played on the Belleville high school football team and was rather shy. He didn't pay much attention to Amy, at first. It was pleasant, being in love with him. He sat back of her in the high school study hall, so she kept a little pocket-mirror in her desk and could find his face in it whenever she wanted to.

She tried to make Reed be nice to her. Lulu saw through her little tricks and laughed. Lulu, at seventeen, was already making eyes at grown-up men.

Amy dreamed of Reed, thought of him all day. Being in love seemed a beautiful prelude to living, to the story that was going to happen. She pursued Reed so patiently that finally he did pay a little attention to her. He took her to a couple of dances. One night, on the way home, he put his arm around her and, in the shadow of the climbing rose on the side porch, he kissed her.

His kiss lifted her into an ecstasy. She lay awake nearly all night thinking about it, about his hair, the curve of his cheek, the feel of his lips. She whispered "Reed, Reed, Reed" over and over. Only once more did Reed make love to her. That was a week later, when he came to tell her that he was going to St. Louis to work for his uncle. He put his arm around her as they sat in the hammock on the porch. Amy trembled delightfully. She never remembered what they said.

She thought of Reed all summer. He wrote her a couple of letters with no particular charm and sent her a poorly-taken picture post-card of himself, which she cut to fit her locket.

Amy went to the state university when she was graduated from high school. Lulu Brown went, too. Because of Lulu's inferior social position and a tendency to make amorous eyes at the boys she was not asked to join a sorority. Amy was, and she gloried in her social supremacy, treating Lulu with great condescension, though they shared letters from home and frequently spent a night together. Lulu was more popular than Amy, but Amy thought some of the boys Lulu went with were "fast." She no longer regarded her as a rival and did not feel as jealous of Lulu as she had in high school.

Amy watched, eagerly, for something to happen. At first she was in love with Reed, but the activities of the university made her a bit dulled toward him. A letter from him, around Christmas of her first year away at school, gave her only the smallest thrill. She could think of his mouth and his eyes with great calm. She rather missed not thinking about him.

Amy did not fall in love at the university, and no one fell in love with her. She went to dances and the other entertainments, treated the boys with the usual half-comrade, half-coy attitude of the other girls, and was fairly popular.

But this was not life, really. It was just waiting for things to happen. Things *must* happen. She felt that. She was going to have a real story happen to her—would probably have exciting adventures and meet a wonderful man and fall in love with him.

In the evenings, at dusk, she would sometimes get away from the other girls and take long walks by herself.

She would get so restless and eager for something to happen that she wanted to cry out for it. Every new face might bring romance. She almost trembled when she passed anyone or when she made a new acquaintance. She often woke up early and, after trying to read, would lie in bed, half-awake, and imagine things that might happen.

Life—what did it mean? Would she fall in love again? Being in love with Reed had just been puppy love, of course. Was the real man only a little way off? Was she destined for great happiness or great unhappiness? Even that—

She learned little things about men, was even humble enough to profit by Lulu's wisdom, even while she disapproved of Lulu's unconventionality.

Lulu seemed to know, instinctively, things that she had to learn.

Two years at the university, a smattering of history and French and German and literature, and Amy was home, ready for "society." She felt another ripple of triumph—Lulu's social position would not warrant a formal social entrance—the Martins planned to introduce Amy with a party at the Elks' Club.

The party was quite a success. Mr. Martin, his chin and neck a bit more indistinguishable, Mrs. Martin, smooth and sleek, buttery almost, stood in the "receiving line," together with several "socially prominent" friends. Amy wore a white organdie that came from Chicago. There was Robinson's Orchestra and dancing. For supper, the local caterer had sent to the city for fresh lobster, a delicacy unobtainable in Belleville. The party was not surpassed by the other four débutante parties of the season.

Amy went to innumerable social affairs that winter. When a theatrical company came to Belleville she was always one of a box party, composed usually of the débutantes and four of Belleville's most desirable young men, all in evening clothes, the girls in dresses bought at the New York Store or made by Madame Jackson, Belleville's one modiste, the men in rather wrinkled suits, but unmistakably their own.

Something was missing, Amy felt that. Reed came back to Belleville, but he was not attractive any more. He went with Claudine Harper, and Amy did not care. Nothing thrilled her at all.

Sometimes, at a dance, an especially good dance with a good partner would awaken her just a little. A chapter from a popular novel could be mooned over half a day. A play sometimes had a moment which lifted her above things. She read poetry, and soothing rhythms pleased her. Sometimes she tried to write, but never achieved anything beyond a vague scribbling about longings and life and love. That was not living. She wanted to scream out, to batter down something that seemed to stand between her and the story that ought to be happening.

III

Amy went with her father and mother and Clarence on a trip to Niagara Falls, Buffalo and New York City. She pretended a great wonder over the falls, but in reality she did not care for scenery.

In New York she felt something of the same emotion she had felt when, at the university, she had taken long walks by herself. She wanted to thrust herself into the city, yet she remained apart, aloof, watching it. Her father, who had been to New York before, took the family on tours of inspection, pointing with his cane—to Amy's embarrassment—to things of interest. Amy saw the tallest buildings, rode in the subway and buses and taxicabs, visited the museums and Chinatown. In Fifth Avenue she bought some frocks and hats for twice as much as she had ever paid in Belleville. In the lobby of their hotel, a commercial hotel of tremendous size, Amy glanced eagerly at the men who stood there, and thought she recognized famous faces, actors or writers or politicians. Once she even smiled at a man who seemed unusually handsome. He started to walk toward her and she became frightened and took the elevator to her room. On the streets she wanted to know people, any of the busy, well-dressed crowd. There were men who looked as if they might be just the sort she liked to read about, clever, cultured. She did not meet any of them.

Back in Belleville, she took up her usual activities, telling of the theatres and show places she had seen in New York. Things seemed duller than ever. Men in Belleville were so definitely unattractive. She wished she lived in New York. But, even as she wished it, a fear of the city came over her. She realized how dreadfully lonely she would feel if she were there alone, how

inadequate she was to fit into any of the groups she had seen.

That winter, by putting her mind to it, she became rather a good bridge player. She was made a member of the Hospital Board League and spent afternoons planning how to raise money for various hospital needs.

Lulu Brown married a man whom she had "picked up" in front of the Belleville House. It happened that he was a New York business man, in Belleville about the new cracker factory, and quite wealthy.

Amy went to the wedding in the small Brown cottage. She gave Lulu a small travelling set of imitation ivory. She envied Lulu in her blue going-away suit more than she had ever envied her before. The man Lulu married was named Fredericks and was a striking-looking fellow. Fredericks told about a New York apartment that he had taken for the winter. Lulu was married and going to live in New York. She—why she was richer and better-bred than Lulu and she had to stay in Belleville, and nothing happened to her.

Two months later Amy went to another wedding. Reed Maddon married Claudine Harper. Amy went with the crowd to the station to see them leave for Chicago on a wedding trip. She was surprised to find how little she cared. Outside of a breathless moment of jealousy she didn't really feel it at all. Yet Reed was the only man she had ever cared about. But, of course, that had been when she was a little girl. She would fall really in love soon and life would begin.

Amy spent the next two winters in Belleville. She and her mother went to Benton Springs for the summers, and her father and Clarence, who was now a partner with his father, came up for alternate week-ends. Her father was more condescending than ever now, because she had not married. He was fatter than ever, and Amy did not like to look at his profile.

At Benton Springs Amy flirted with the men at the hotel, colourless, small-town men who were trying hard to get pleasure out of an inexpensive holiday. She did not find them very entertaining. She attended the hotel dances on Saturday nights and went to another hotel for Wednesday evening festivities. She played tennis and golf.

She had a mild love affair with a young lawyer from Texas, and he kissed her one night as they were walking toward the hotel.

After she had gone to bed she thought about him. He was not the sort of man she had planned to marry at all. He did not attract her, but the masculine smell of his coat had been pleasant and he was not bad looking. Amy decided that, if he asked her to marry him, she would accept him. He did not propose. He left the hotel three days later. With the exception of a picture post-card, she never heard from him again.

Something like a panic seized Amy the next winter. The girls in her set were getting married one after another and new débutantes were appearing each season. Great adventures did not come to her. Even little things did not happen. She felt almost trapped. What if she were wrong about life, about the story?

She visited, with new clothes as aids, her mother's cousin in Harperton and her Aunt Ella in Demont. She had good times. Girls gave bridge parties for her. Men took her to parties. She did not have a love affair or any other adventures. She felt she was just as attractive as other girls. They found beaux. Still, to the others, she might seem popular, too. She got candy and flowers and invitations. It was just that nothing really came close enough, love or marriage or any sort of happening. She still felt as if she were not really living, as if life were waiting for her, outside of some gate. She was bound to find it, if she waited.

She returned to Belleville in January, and the next month Millard Kenton came to Belleville on business. His cousins lived there, so he was included in the town's social affairs. Amy met him, as she always met the visitors.

Kenton was attentive to her immediately. She disliked him at first. He was small and had brown hair which was getting thin at twenty-eight. There was nothing forceful or vital about him. His strongest opinions seemed to have no importance. Nothing he could do ever could have any significance, Amy felt.

Yet, because he liked her, Amy ignored Kenton's colourlessness and made herself as attractive as she could. She was slender and had nice eyes and hair and wore pretty, small-town, fluffy dresses.

When Kenton called, they sat in the living-room and talked or played bridge with other couples or went to the theatre.

Sometimes, when she was alone with Kenton, Amy looked at his indefinite, uninteresting face and wondered how she could keep on talking with him. What a bore he was! She liked him a little better, but felt that he was more insignificant than a man ought to be.

Kenton's home was in Minota, Oklahoma, where he was with an oil company. He went back to Minota and wrote to Amy on his business stationery in a small, slanting handwriting. His letters were colourless, too.

Kenton came back to Belleville in April and asked Amy to marry him. She had encouraged him in little ways, listening with flattering attention to his opinions, answering his letters with half-finished sentences that were meant to show that she liked him.

Amy had never had a real proposal of marriage. She felt that the great romance, as she had dreamed it, would never come to her. But all the other girls were marrying. Being married would open new avenues. Maybe, after marriage, she would have adventures. If things did happen—she could leave Kenton any time she wanted to—

IV

THEY had a church wedding. Amy wore a very elaborate wedding gown and veil, and six of her best friends were bridesmaids, in pale green. Amy showed her artistic training by designing huge fans for the girls to carry, instead of the usual flowers.

Amy and Kenton went to housekeeping in an apartment in Minota, Oklahoma, which they furnished with huge, overstuffed chairs and mahogany furniture.

Amy did not like Minota. It was an oil town, and the smell of the oil permeated everything. Minota was a little smaller than Belleville and definitely newer and flimsier. She knew several former Belleville people there, so, after a first loneliness, a feeling of not belonging any place, she settled down comfortably enough. Soon she was one of the set of "younger matrons" and went to bridge games and parties quite as she had done at home.

She missed Belleville. After six months she went home on a visit. When she got there she was at once restless and dissatisfied and didn't know what to do. After she had seen her parents and her friends and had walked down the familiar streets, she was quite willing to go back to Minota again.

She grew to like Kenton a great deal. Now that she could read while he was at home, or ignore him altogether, he did not bore her. They had so many things in common—their home, their friends—that at times he seemed almost interesting.

A year after Amy married, Millard, junior, was born. Amy had read and thought that motherhood was a thing apart, almost an exalted state. She welcomed it, frightened but eager. It left her much the same, without the ecstasy she had anticipated.

Two years later Maria-Anna came. Amy was very fond of her children.

When Millard was four Arnold Thompson came to Minota. He was good-looking and had the reputation of being popular with women. Amy encouraged him to notice her. The Kentons were living in their own home now, a white bungalow, and they had a coloured maid who took almost entire charge of the children.

Thompson telephoned and asked to call one afternoon.

Amy sent the maid out with the children and dressed in a great flutter of excitement. Thompson came about four. They talked, and Amy listened attentively, though, to her surprise, Thompson's conversation was just like the other men's she knew and did not interest her. She played a little on the piano. Before she knew it, Thompson had put his arms about her, was kissing her. She lay passive in his arms for a moment, even kissed him in return. The thrill she had expected was not there. She felt cheapened instead. She pushed him away, not angrily, but rather with indifference, and told him "You'd better go."

For weeks after that Amy suffered keenly from remorse. It was the deepest emotion she had had in a long time. Kenton was so good—and she had let another man kiss her. What must Thompson think of her? If Kenton should find out? She was ashamed of herself. She was greatly relieved when, a month later, she heard that Thompson had left Minota.

Life in Minota went on pleasantly enough, punctuated with visits to Belleville and even a visit to New York, after a successful business deal. Kenton was doing well in business. The children were growing nicely.

Sometimes Amy felt the old desires, the wanting to live. She would grow restless and walk in her room, up and down, and long for something to happen. Then would come a reaction, a hope that nothing would take place to change her comfortable state as a nice little married woman.

Things did not change until Amy was thirty-six. Then Kenton took cold and died of pneumonia after only four days' illness. Amy grieved sincerely. She missed Kenton a great deal and told everyone that theirs had been an ideal life.

She sold the house, and she and the children went back to Belleville to live with her parents.

In Belleville Amy took up, in a quiet way, the activities of the women of her age. Kenton had been insured. The hardware store with the red axes on the windows was still prosperous. Amy's father was bald now, and quite fat. Her mother was complacently busy about home and church matters. Clarence was married and had a home of his own. Life in the Martin home was comfortable, in a quiet, uneventful way.

Lulu Fredericks came through Belleville on her way to California and stopped for a visit with relatives. Amy was rather awed and resentful at Lulu's clothes and her grand manner and Eastern accent. Lulu had travelled in Europe even. Lulu, who had been of so much less importance in Belleville, had had adventures. And she, Amy, hadn't lived at all—nothing had happened.

Amy remembered the book she had read when she was a little girl, that had said that each person's life contains a plot for a story. It made her angry to think of it. Her life hadn't been a story. Nothing had happened to her. She was sorry she had read that book. It it hadn't been for that she would never have felt the way she did about life. She might have enjoyed things more, one at a time. Now, though she couldn't touch them definitely, she felt that she had missed pleasant things, or ignored them, because she had wanted bigger things instead.

The author of that book had cheated her—life had cheated her. How could anyone have written such nonsense? Amy knew there was no story in her life—in most lives. Yet she knew that there always would be people like Lulu to remind her of the fact that there were people whose lives were like stories, after all.

After the children were in bed, Amy sat at the window and looked out on the little lawn. The trees and the bushes looked badly taken care of, neglected. She must see that the yard was fixed up, right away. Her life—it was all she had—it did seem too bad that nothing had happened to her—school—parties—marriage—babies—widowhood—nothing—no story at all.

THE GREEN CORD

By K. T. Edmondson

HENRY P. SMITHERS was a believer in mottoes. The walls of his private office were covered with them, neatly framed. Sometimes he called them slogans. One of his favourites was, "It's The Little Things That Count."

"What's that you're reading?" he asked his young assistant, Pelham Brainard, one afternoon as the latter was preparing to depart for home with a book under his arm.

Mr. Smithers made it a point to notice everything about his employes, from the exact minute of their arrival in the morning to the style in which they brushed their hair.

The young man reluctantly submitted the book to his employer, who glanced at the cover, then at the title page. It was a copy of Epictetus.

"Never heard of him," said Mr. Smithers. "Who's he?"

"He was a—a philosopher," replied Brainard, his pale face apologetic behind tortoise-rimmed spectacles.

"A highbrow, eh?" snapped the president of the Smithers Hardwood Sales Corporation; "and how much did he make out of it?"

"Well, you see, he wasn't exactly trying to make money," meekly began Brainard.

"Precisely," interrupted the other dryly. "You must get over wasting your time with such stuff if you ever expect to amount to anything. It isn't the way to succeed in life. Let me give you something to take home that is really worth reading." He entered his office, and in a moment returned with a book entitled, "One Hundred and One Ideas for Increasing Sales," by Augustus Epstein, of the Venus Corset Company.

"There's a man who has really made a success in life!" he said. "And, what's more, he tells you how he did it."

And Mr. Smithers, sternly exalted by the consciousness of duty well done, retired to his sanctum to dictate a dozen or more telegrams before taking his own departure.

It would be going too far to say that Henry P. Smithers' hundred or more office employes and employées loved him for the aggressive personal interest he took in their welfare, but he paid good salaries, and if they found it rather difficult to measure up to all the lettered admonitions which stared accusingly at them from the wall when they were called into their chief's office, they had, at any rate, the encouragement of his high example, for he was a hard and conscientious worker. He believed sincerely that genius was "one per cent. inspiration and ninety-nine per cent. perspiration." He wanted them all to be geniuses like himself. Just what the word genius meant to him might be gathered from another of his handsomely framed mottoes which proclaimed that "Salesmanship Is The Greatest Of All Professions."

Still another of his favourite slogans, strange to say, was "Keep Smiling!"

He was as incapable of a real smile as an Australian pygmy would be of contemplating the problems of the fourth dimension, for nothing in the wide world was either humorous or amusing to him. But he had gathered from reading the business uplift magazines that smiling was a valuable commercial asset, and so he had trained

the muscles of his face to break, on occasion, into a sort of grimace which creased the lines of his cheeks and partly disclosed his teeth, while his eyes maintained their customary cold and level stare. He imagined that this corpse-like rictus was pleasing and ingratiating. To nervous or sensitive people it was appalling.

Early in life he had read, in a periodical devoted to "system," that "Efficiency is the elimination of everything that interferes," and it was one of the maxims on which he had modelled his successful career. Novels, music, theatres, he regarded as a waste of time and energy. Anything tainted with an intellectual flavour he viewed with profound suspicion and contempt. He considered such things "weak" and "impractical." One of his ambitions was to see big business take over all the educational institutions of the country and operate them on what he termed "practical lines." Carrying out this idea in a small way, at his own expense, he had employed a professor of English to go through eight or ten grammars and rhetorics, eliminating what Mr. Smithers called the "frills and ornaments," and boiling the result down to a book entitled "Salesmanship Talks With A Punch."

Faithful to his favourite motto, "It's The Little Things That Count," Mr. Smithers was always on the lookout for some "little thing" to criticize or change in every piece of office detail that passed over his desk for approval. This made his employes and employées careful. Frequently it also made them unhappy.

One day Mr. Smithers sent for his young assistant Pelham Brainard. They were engaged in plans to entertain at luncheon a hundred or more preachers and church trustees, to whom the sales manager was to present the advantages of a new style church pew which one of the Smithers plants had begun to manufacture in large quantities. Afterwards there was to be a "follow-up campaign" with letters and circulars.

"I want you to go out and get some fine, white, unruled paper of foolscap size," specifically directed Mr. Smithers, "to be fastened to a writing board with a clip, and circulated, with a pencil, among the guests, so that they can write down their names."

This seemed a small matter, but the long-suffering young assistant knew his chief—knew that nothing was a small matter to him. He went out, repeating to himself, "It is the little things that count," selected the paper carefully, securing a writing board of exactly the proper size, sharpened a pencil with meticulous attention . . . surveyed his work . . . and then said to himself:

"But suppose a man absent-mindedly puts the pencil in his pocket and passes the board on to a neighbour who has no pencil. This would be psychologically wrong. It would annoy the second man, and perhaps put him in a state of mind unreceptive to Smithers hardwood pews."

Here was a problem.

Close at hand there happened to be a ball of green silk cord. It caught the young man's eye, and with it came an inspiration. He cut off a piece of convenient length, made a notch in the pencil and tied it to the clip of the writing board.

Modestly, but triumphantly, he laid it on his chief's desk, and was about to retire when Henry P. Smithers paused in his dictation, glanced at the result of his assistant's handiwork, and called him back.

"Pelham—a little point. Now just what will be the effect of this cord?"

"Why, sir, its effect will be to keep the pencil from getting lost."

"You don't quite catch my meaning," said his employer, with a touch of impatience, accompanied by that curious, cold, mechanical smile which his subordinates so much dreaded. "I mean, what will be the effect of the green colour? You know, we are dealing with ministers. Don't you think pearl gray or black would be more suitable?"

Something suddenly snapped in the back of the young man's brain.

Three words in huge gothic letters seemed to detach themselves from the wall and rush upon him.

They were: "DO IT NOW!"

An hour later they found Henry P. Smithers in his chair, staring at his mottoes with sightless eyes. The green cord was knotted tightly around his neck.

And he was quite dead.

THE SINGER

By A. Newberry Choyce

AS I came by Kildorory
I met a slender lad
And he had thinly-shapen hands
And shining eyes he had.

More of a woman than a man . . .
Yea, O rough-throated men!
But I would drip my reddest blood
To hear him sing again.

Though naught he told of high amaze
Nor any clever whim,
But only the sweet olden ache
Was in the heart of him.

So build you houses straight and strong
To shade you from the sun
And you shall stand in his dear debt
When everything is done.

Whose slender hands and shining eyes
Hath fashioned in the town
A thing that shall be safe and sweet
When walls are tumbled down.

ALL women are anti-Prohibitionists, to this extent, at least: they all wish that some drink would be invented that would make their husbands fall in love with them all over again.

WHEN YOU CAME TO ME

By Oscar Williams

WHEN you came to me in the dusty midday of my life,
Oh beautiful one,
You drew aside the hot blue daylight, like a curtain,
And revealed to me the shimmering delirium of night,
The madness of stars and darkness and blowing winds. . . .

THE STRONGER

By Zoë Ongley

I CLENCH my love, I beat my love,
I stamp it to the floor;
It turns to me and says to me
"I hold you more."

I slash my love, I knife my love,
I brand it with hot bars;
It turns to me and says to me
"You bear my scars."

I seize my love, I choke my love,
I try to cut its breath;
It turns to me and says to me
"My death's your death."

DANCING is nothing but hugging set to music. The puritan wants to abolish the hugging; the gay boy wants to abolish the music.

STAR MAGIC

By Joseph Upper

I

BELDEN undressed slowly, looking about him at the furniture of the unfamiliar room. It was the typical bucolic "spare room," that was plain. The dresser at one end of it was covered with an elaborate hand-embroidered scarf and on top of this reposed a large hand mirror face down. The hand mirror was quite superfluous, for the dresser itself was surmounted by a large oval looking-glass.

Belden rather guessed that the hand mirror had been a present—one of the good-looking, useless kind that evokes admiration at the time of its receipt and detestation ever afterward. No brush, comb, pin-cushion, or any object which might have served the purposes of an overnight guest was in evidence—only the silver-backed hand mirror lying on the embroidered scarf.

The wash-stand at the other end of the room was more utilitarian. In addition to the dignified bowl and pitcher, it boasted a soap dish in which there was actually a piece of soap. The bed stood in the centre of the room, an extra blanket folded carefully across the foot of it. The instantly recognized smell of the matting on the floor reminded him of spare rooms he had occupied in other such rural houses. The oil lamp which his host had left on the corner of the wash-stand was also reminiscent of long-forgotten visits to friends and relatives in the country.

When he was ready for bed he blew out the lamp and sat down in the darkness by the window. He could make out nothing clearly. There was rolling land with clumps of trees and in the distance the lights of another farmhouse. There was no moon, but the sky was spattered with gleaming stars of all sizes. In the city, one forgot that there were so many stars.

They had been out in the lane looking up at the stars just a little while before. His host—it was funny to think of that curly-headed fellow in the next office as his host—had struck a match to light his cigarette, and his young wife had playfully blown it out.

"That's my last match, too," the young husband had observed ruefully.

"Oh, baby!" The words had been accompanied by a caressing grasp on her husband's arm. They held the repentant note of a fond mother who apologizes for having thoughtlessly overturned her child's house of blocks, and they carried into the night air an echo of an all-absorbing love. It was an utterly silly exclamation, of course, but the young fellow seemed to understand it in all its intended significance. For the moment the two had forgotten the presence of their guest, and he had gazed steadily at the stars. The stars had suddenly formed a large constellation that swam about in a phosphorescent sea.

Looking out at them now from the window of the darkened spare room, it seemed that they grinned mockingly. Belden felt older and lonelier than he ever had before. Life was as black as the shadows beneath the window. The past was as useless as the hand mirror on the dresser and the future was as colourless as the water in the pitcher on the wash-stand. Belden admitted that the curly-headed youngster in the next office had beaten him in the game

men called living. He wanted somebody to say something to *him*, no matter how silly it might be, that would hold one-half the expression of that funny exclamation he had heard under the stars.

He got up and stumbled across the matting in the direction of the bed. For a long time he lay awake thinking, and it seemed to him that the cruel grinning stars had found their way into his thoughts and were torturing him with the white-hot irons of lonely misery.

II

When he came down to breakfast, the morning sunshine filled the dining-room. The baby sat in its carriage near the window and laughed and gurgled and played with its hands. He knelt on the floor and talked to it baby fashion, but his eyes were so serious that it became frightened and began to cry.

He chatted and joked his way through breakfast with a sense of difficulty. The meal over, there was little time left before they caught the train to town. As he bade his hostess good-bye, it seemed to him that he must be just emerging from a tender but painful dream. The train carrying him and the curly-headed youngster into the city passed a stretch of wooded land where a small army of trees successfully held off the advancing sun. He thought that he had suddenly been shown a picture of his own soul—a dark place full of the growth of selfishness and almost proof against the warmth of actual life.

But not quite. There *were* places in that long stretch of wooded valley where the sun's beams had forced their way, where they paraded triumphantly as they sometimes did in the still aisles of empty churches after having melted the hearts of the stained-glass apostles and so gained forbidden admittance. And somewhere in his consciousness there was a similar vulnerable spot at which the seemingly trivial experience of the night before had taken careful aim.

Belden found himself wondering what had become of the girl whom he had formerly associated with such dreams and fancies as that experience had suddenly revived. It was a long time since he had given her a thought. He had almost convinced himself that he had forgotten her, and now by a simple invitation to spend a night in the country, this rash Benedick beside him had worked he knew not what incalculable mischief.

Somehow, Belden could not rid himself of the feeling that he ought to be riding in another train, past other and far more pretentious expanses of wooded land. It was somewhere beyond a stretch of wooded country to the north that *she* filled up these stupid days with teaching.

He wondered if she found her brief journeys to and from the old high school as dull and profitless as this interminable ride into town. He was glad *he* didn't live in the country and have to make this monotonous trip every day. His companion must become sickeningly tired of it. When *his* work was done, he had only to go to his rooms and make ready for the evening, while the curly-headed youngster must wait for one of these damned trains and be carried out into the country with this commuting army. And yet, it was very beautiful in the country, especially under the stars, and at times he thought that *he* could cheerfully part with all he had if only to know that someone cared enough about him to call him silly names because his last match went out.

At the end of the day, he sat at his desk long after the curly-headed youngster had left the office to rejoin the army of commuters, and debated with himself whether or not he was a fool. Three times he assured himself that he was not and began a letter to a school teacher in a northern State, and three times he told himself that he was, and tore the letter into small pieces. But that evening in his lonesome rooms he confided to his books that he didn't give a damn and that he was going in search of her anyway. And the next morning he arranged for a week's leave of absence.

III

THE red plush seats of the familiar railway coach looked older than when he saw them last, but they were none the less friendly for all that, and when a sunbeam jumped from one window of the car to another the dingy plush shone with all of its old time allurement. How full of romance and mystery the world had been in those days! What a difference a small bundle of years could make. It had not been such a long time since he went away, and the scenes he had traversed thus far did not appear to have changed greatly; and yet he felt strangely out of harmony with them, strangely alien and old.

He wondered whether she would find him so, or whether he would fit naturally into the picture after a little practice and appear not to have suffered any more at the hands of the forgotten years than the old plush seats in the coach. He was sure that *she* would not be changed. He would seek her out in her school-room, and she would be a little more dignified, perhaps, than when he had seen her last, a trifle more mature, a little—a very little older; but she would turn to him the same clear, understanding eyes and almost before he had a chance to speak to her she would know why he had come.

He wondered if she had known that he would come all the while, and as he thought about it he seemed to realize more and more clearly that she had. Well, she had been wiser than he. And yet, perhaps, he had known it too, only he had kept the certain knowledge hidden away somewhere, pretending that he didn't really possess it, until that night in the country lane when the subtle influence of star magic had instantly brought him face to face with it.

Yes, it was the girl wife of the curly-headed youngster in the next office who had uttered the mystic formula—such an infernally silly expression!—grasping repentantly at the arm of the young husband who had just been deprived of his last match. It was the magic of the stars that had revealed it to him, and it was the stars that had bored the realization of it into his aching soul afterward in the spare room of that little house in the country, while all the crickets in Christendom had sung about it in the neighbouring fields to make doubly sure he shouldn't forget it by morning or think that it had been a dream.

He had not written her that he was coming. After he had torn up the third letter, he had decided not to write any more but just to come, as quickly as the two railroads between them could cover the miles of woods and fields and pass all the troublesome cities. The first railroad had been left behind yesterday and most of the cities with it, and now the second, the old familiar one, was bearing him along past the last of the woods and it would be only a few hours before he could alight at the little brick station and turn his eager steps in the direction of the school house.

By degrees he felt himself becoming more a part of things. The awkwardness began to wear off. He stretched his legs under the seat in front of him and smiled at the cushioned back where the sunlight reached it from the window. If life could not be mysterious any longer, perhaps it still held romance, and if he could shake himself altogether free of this lethargic spell which the years had cast over him, he felt sure that he should still find it vigorous.

IV

WHEN the conductor opened the rear door of the coach and called the name of the little station, the sense of unreality came back again. The conductor's voice seemed like a hoarse echo of utterances he had once heard in a language that was no longer used. Belden gazed earnestly out of the window in an effort to recover his grip on the past. Surely it must come back to him. Nine years was not eternity.

There was the marble works, and in a moment they must cross the river. Yes, he could see the sun on the water. The train began to rumble across the iron bridge. There was a scattered group of

workmen's houses next, then a forgotten street with a flagman at the railroad crossing. A few of the passengers were getting ready to leave. The station was very near. Another street. The houses were thicker here. Yes, he could see the white posts with the black railing at the extreme end of the station lot. He was in the aisle with the others and he felt just a trifle unsteady. It continually recurred to him that he had no business here, and he was displeased with himself for thinking so. Ahead of him a travelling salesman wrestled with a heavy sample case.

He stepped on to the platform and walked a short distance away, where he stood watching the train. A breeze scurrying past carried an odour of petunias from the circular bed opposite the station.

With the departure of the train, his feeling of alienation increased. He paused after a few uncertain steps in the direction of the town, wondering why he should feel as he did. Surely he had not mistaken his own wishes. He had truly wanted to come back to this place of memories; had formulated a definite purpose. Why was he wavering now? He seemed suddenly to be oppressed with a strange sense of loss, a feeling akin to homesickness. Shaking off the threatening depression, he walked on. Slowly the streets took on a more familiar look, but there was something remote in it that he was at a loss to understand. The houses seemed to be peering out at him from behind barriers, viewing him as children look with suspicion upon a strange and unattractive visitor.

When he reached the school house he stood for what seemed to him a long time looking at its austere windows and its forbidding bricks. Somehow, it exhaled none of the welcome that he had anticipated. It stared at him as though to rebuke his temerity in making any claim to its acquaintance. He mounted the steps almost apologetically.

In the principal's office, a strange young woman rose quickly from her desk with the unsolicited information that this was the hour of the day when the principal taught chemistry. Was there anything she could do?

He looked at her searchingly. She resembled no one he had known.

In reply to his question she gave him the commiserating glance reserved for strangers and prodigals. No, *she* was not there. She did not teach any more. He knew, of course, that she and the principal were recently married?

V

Leaning back on the faded plush of one of the seats in the old railway coach, Belden could not tell whether he was profoundly sorry or simply relieved. One by one the landmarks that he had once known, but which had forgotten him, passed out of sight. The train was carrying him back in the direction of the loneliness he had fled from only to find a sense of greater loneliness at the end of the journey.

He thought of his work at the office, of the prospects it offered, of his comfortable rooms, and of his freedom from responsibility, and the allurements of the city with its numerous and varied attempts to please. If he had found her as he had expected to, and they had returned together, it would have necessitated many changes in his mode of living to which he had given no thought when he reacted to the emotional impulse born under the light of multitudinous stars on a spring evening in the country. Perhaps he would have found many of those changes difficult. He was not sure, after all, that his journey had sprung from anything more fundamental than a vague discontent, and discontent was common to all men at intervals.

"I guess I'm just growing into a selfish, sentimental old bachelor," he mused, and the monotonous chuckle of the wheels under the old coach seemed to impress him with the conviction that he had spoken the truth.

But hours later when he looked out of the window and perceived the first stars in the sky, he experienced a momentary pang.

A POUND OF CHOCOLATES

By Walter Yust

I

FOR six years Lily loved Zoll; for six years she wept at intervals on Mama Zoll's breast; for six years she suffered the humiliation of Zoll's coarse indifference to her; for six years, off and on, Zoll chucked her boxes of cheap chocolates by way of expressing that he was still courtin'; and finally Lily married him. . . . She couldn't do much else, after keeping company for six years. Zoll was her one best bet.

Her wedding was something of a shattering of dreams.

"They won't be no beer at our weddin', hah, Bill?" she had begged. And Bill grunted. It was his privilege, being a man, to grunt at woman.

"I want to be married in a church," said Lily, "with an organ, an' a minister in his robes."

And for the first time since he was a small child, Zoll stood inside a church.

"I'd try anythin' onct," said he, gallantly.

They returned from the church to their bridal home on Clark Street which Zoll had rented. It was the little frame house that neighbours were happy to point out as having been built over the bed of the Cohocksink Creek that flowed in the days when dirty Kensington was all green fields and farms. The bridal couple returned to their home in a carriage trailing old shoes and white ribbons and "Just Married" signs. An old can, that banged and clattered behind, especially excited Lily's risibility as she cuddled close to her career. When the pair of them, with bridesmaid and best man, left the carriage, they were welcomed by the elder Mr. and Mrs. Zoll and Mrs. and Mr. Werther, Lily's parents, and they all sat down to supper. It was just what Lily had planned, had been looking forward to for years, this quiet happy supper with Bill and the folks alone in her own home. And she was radiant.

But before the meal was ended a loud pounding on the door shook the little old house and Lily's life.

Annoyed, she opened the front door, and a chorus of neighbours greeted her:

"Hail, hail, the gang's all here:
We come to see the bri-ide,
We come to see the bri-ide."

George Branden, fat Uncle George, stood on the top steps. His coat was turned inside out; on his head tilted a fireman's hat; and he was directing the chorus with a hatchet. In back of him followed four men, each of whom gripped an end of two parallel boards. Between this improvised carrier was strapped a large beer keg, and nailed to the keg was a stick with an American flag floating from it.

The army behind the keg—an army of neighbours, men and women, who carried packages and who sang lustily—marched through the open doorway, Uncle George leading. The women clustered around Lily in the parlour and the men, who gathered together all the packages, romped into the dining-room, where Uncle George shortly superintended the ritual of tapping the keg. The guests dumped their packages on the table—packages of cheese, blutwurst, ham bologna, pretzels, kimmel bread—and Mrs. Branden made sandwiches.

All this while there sounded a constant chatter, and laughter very loud, and ribald innuendoes about the bride and groom.

Soon every glass was filled and promptly emptied. Somebody started the phonograph, a wedding gift from the Werthers; everybody said "That's a fine record;" but nobody really listened. Somebody sang; Uncle George clowned it a bit.

"Ain't George killin'? . . . wait . . . just wait . . . when he's got a little in 'im, he's funnier still!"

When Lily could, she slipped upstairs. Mrs. Zoll found her on the bed weeping.

"My nice supper," she sobbed. "Oh, my nice supper . . . damn him! Damn George Branden! Damn George Branden for this . . ."

And so the evening wore merrily on, till it was early the next morning, till most of the men were drunk, and one of the women.

Came the good-byes.

"Goo' bye . . . goo' bye . . . goo' bye . . ." thickly from Bill. Everybody seemed to be shouting "good-bye" and "good luck," so he supposed he ought to be doing it too, being the master of a house of his own now. He wasn't quite clear what it was all about, however.

He stood beside Lily in the doorway. She was waving her hands to the departing guests.

Bill weakly raised his.

"Goo' bye . . . goo' bye . . . many happy 'turns the day . . ."

He might have fallen asleep at the door-jamb, but his wife led him by the arm into the new home. She closed the door behind her.

The gas flickered with the rush of air. The chairs were where the guests had pushed them as they crowded about in the stuffy little rooms. On the shiny top of the parlour table were seven beer glasses—three on their sides, the beer dripping to the floor.

Bits of bread lay on the carpet where they had dropped from hands none too steady. A sandwich with a corner bitten out of it was on the gilt chair Zoll's mother had given them "not to sit on, but to look at." Out in the dining-room, the table was covered with a clutter of greasy manilla paper, the skin of blutwurst, broken pretzels, an empty quart bottle thrown over on its side, a thread of whisky spreading out into a little pool at its neck. Beside the table, and resting on cross sticks, stood the keg with its little Stars and Stripes hanging limp.

Bill had fallen into a chair and now stared stupidly at the door. Suddenly his eyes brightened, and then he shook with maudlin laughter.

The next morning there were three deep scratches on Bill's heavy face . . . "Foolin' with our damn cat," he assured his smirking friends.

II

Such was the beginning of Lily's married life in her new home where the Cohocksink Creek once flowed when Kensington was all green fields and farms.

For a year or so after the fateful wedding day, Lily's married life was not intolerable. There was much to do, even for so small a home, to keep it clean and neat. As a wedded wife, too, with much responsibility, shopping at the market, in the stores, proved to be a kind of game to make ends meet; to carefully pit her weekly allowance from Zoll against their needs and the prices of the merchants. Proudly she recounted her economies to her husband while he sat grunting at his meals. And for a time, Zoll enjoyed listening to her little victories; for a time he was content to remain at home nights reading, as his good father was accustomed to read, while Lily sewed, as her good mother was accustomed to sew; for a time even to go out together, to call on their friends, to see the movies, held a measure of mild amusement for Zoll.

But not for a long time. Zoll had been too arrogant a wooer for six years. As a matter of fact, it was only reasonable that a man of Kensington

should be an arrogant wooer. Otherwise, he would lose caste with his fellows and perhaps lose the girl. Bill had never permitted Lily to interfere with his diversions, and Lily, true to her kind, never really tried to interfere with them during the long courtship.

"Bill ain't bad," she used to weep on Mama Zoll's breast. "It's on'y he's so easy led;" and Lily continued to be, as it seemed her duty to be, the constant welcoming harbour to which Bill, a kind of tramper, might return for repairs when broken with sailing on the multitudinous seas. She received him gratefully when he chose to swing back to her. And if Lily, more or less unbound, waited for him six years, certainly Lily tied down by marriage rites and a home would still wait. Besides, Lily's gossip about the neighbours and the housely and neighbourhood interests ran too insipidly the same, breakfast after breakfast, supper after supper, night after night. And, too, no children ever came.

Instead of "settlin' down" after the marriage, as Lily and Bill's mother had hoped he would, he returned to his old friends. At first for a number of years, fitfully; but later, regularly. He soon ceased going out with Lily, and never bought her chocolates any more, and came home nights only to sleep.

He let Lily wait with her supper until it was cold; he remained in bed in the morning until Lily shouted herself hoarse. Frequently he did not return home for supper; not infrequently he stayed away all night. And the days for Lily began checking themselves off, endless, monotonous, one after the other, like the ticking of the gilt clock in her darkened parlour. The hands of the clock never moved synchronously, and never pointed the right time; but Lily lived her weary days to learn that "it's tickin' was comp'ny" and she always kept it wound up.

And the years dragged by, Lily, once as pretty and as fragile as her name, turned sallow, angular, morose. Her voice lost its softness and took on a rasping edge. She slouched along in unlaced shoes, indifferent both to dress and to the tidiness of her home. Unwashed dishes were left to feed flies and smell in the kitchen; her front marble steps, once the pride and the care of her early married life, gathered a crust of dirt through neglect. She left off visiting her own parents and the Zolls, and they found no joy in visiting her. The Werthers grieved over her apparent loss of control and blamed Zoll; the Zolls grieved over Lily's unwholesome effect on Bill, who visited them only to add his troubles to their own.

All day Lily puttered aimlessly about her gloomy house. She arose from bed before Zoll in the early morning when he was home, and prepared his breakfast and sullenly waited for him to come downstairs for it. Most of the day she sat in her broken rocker in the kitchen, trying to follow the ticking of the gilt clock when the ticking merged and lost itself in the general day noises.

She soon stopped thinking; its pain made her apathetic. Sometimes she glanced at last night's newspaper which Zoll on rare occasions brought home, but never could she read for long. Late in the afternoon, she shuffled about to get ready a supper for Zoll, and then sought the rocker again to wait. If Zoll returned home late—and when he returned at all it was usually late, and the supper was dry and cold—Lily whined about his belated arrival; and he, in indignation, would snarl and eat his ruined meal or leave the table to buy his supper elsewhere. Those nights when he stayed away till very late or all night, Lily would light the dim gas in the kitchen and rock until sleep overpowered her. She would drag her stiff legs up the narrow winding stairs to her lonely bed.

Lily had waited for so many things: for the happiness that hid always behind the horizon, for Zoll to marry her, for the children that never came. Now she only waited for the sound of Zoll's stumbling feet on the steps, for the fumbling of his key at the keyhole, waited for the slam of the shut door,

waited for the sight of his drunken self. The only pleasure—it can scarcely be called a pleasure—the only satisfaction she experienced, was the satisfaction of his actual coming, after she had waited so long. And it wasn't Zoll who gave her that satisfaction, it was merely his coming. If she had waited long for the rain, and it had fallen, she would have felt the same kind of satisfaction. . . . She waited with serious purposefulness now, as if Zoll couldn't come if she didn't wait.

And then, one night, while she was waiting, Lily heard the creek lashing around down under her cellar . . . swishin' like a swell's skirt with spangles. . . .

And after that night, whenever she listened, she heard only those two things, the tick-tick-tick of the gilt clock and the creek . . . moanin' . . . down in the cellar.

III

Zoll reported on the afternoon of the day before Christmas at the auditorium of Murphy's Cotton Mills where he worked. A notice had been posted in all the departments about the usual Christmas celebration.

And it was the usual Christmas celebration: a beaming parson with a Sunday-school smile invoked the blessing of his friend, God; somebody played "Silent Night" on the organ; three women, wives of the officials of Murphy's mills, sang an old English carol and went home convinced that they experienced the glow of sacrifice freely made; the beaming parson for fifteen minutes amplified the Bible story of the manger; finally, Mr. Murphy himself with his wig and comfortable stomach told the assembled employees how honoured he was to be associated with such an intelligent body of men and women, and how it was not so much a present to receive as it was a privilege to give this pound of chocolates to each and every worker in the mills in appreciation of their service and good-will during the year gone by. He wished them all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, and then signalled that the pound box of chocolates be distributed as the men and women filed out.

Bill Zoll, hair streaked with gray, fat and red, grasped his box of chocolates, and sauntered over to the "club" where he might secure his drink in spite of the prohibition officer. There he remained the rest of the day. He refused to let go his pound box.

"What y' huggin' them choc'lates for, Zoll?"

"For the ol' woman," Zoll had to explain to more than one inquirer that afternoon and evening. "She used to like can'y onct . . . when we was young."

He wept reminiscently as he sat with George Branden, quite old now, at a table in the club. Neither of them was sober enough to play cards with the others.

"Mus' go home—soon," Uncle George hiccoughed his sticky words, "Gotta trim Chris'mas tree. Paid dolar'n half for tree . . . ridic'loush—price . . . but gotta have tree. Don' look like—Chris'mas 'thout—a tree. When he tol' me—dollar'n half . . . thinks I, tha's dam ridic'loush price for tree. But don' look like—"

Zoll solemnly held up his box of chocolates for George to see. The box was very dirty, the ribbon was untied, the elaborate bow gone. One corner of the box was smashed in.

"For th' ol' woman," explained Zoll. "She used to like can'y onct . . . when we was young."

It was close to midnight when Zoll and Branden reached their homes. The light from the parlour of the Branden home shone through the yellow curtains.

"Started trimmin'," commented George.

"Mer' Chris'mas," he said to Zoll. They gravely shook hands.

"Same to you an' many of 'em," answered Zoll and felt his way up the steps of his home.

He fumbled with the key, finally opened the door.

He took the battered box of chocolates from under his arm, held it in

front of him with both hands and with drunken dignity marched to the kitchen.

"Here's poun' box o' choc'lates . . . used to like can'y onct . . . Mer' Chri—" Zoll was saying to his wife when she sprang at him.

Lily Zoll stared at the bloody bread knife. Her husband lay on the floor, red blood fast gathering at his breast and running to the carpet. The chocolates were scattered about.

Lily listened.

The gilt clock had stopped.

"The crick . . ." she whispered "Swishin' aroun' . . . like it was a storm . . . there . . ."

The knife dropped from her hand. Down the cellar steps she sped.

Dugan, the policeman, found her early Christmas morning. He heard wild screams coming from the Zoll cellar. He broke in the door and found Zoll, dead in a spread of blood, and Lily Zoll crouched in the corner of the coal bin, "dribblin' some damn nonsense," he said, "about a crick."

THE KISS OF LOVE

By Stewart Holmes

THE kiss of love is enkindled on the hands, flames to the throat and lips, smoulders on the cheeks, and dies in cold ashes on the forehead.

SPRING

By Oscar Williams

SPRING is the scent
Of some god's beautiful flower
Whose petals are the dawns.

IN her first love-affair, a woman assumes a new rôle. But thereafter she plays in repertoire.

REDEMPTION

By David Morton

THE old gods wait where secret beauty stirs,
By green, untempled altars of the Spring,
If haply still there be some worshippers
Whose hearts are sweet with long remembering.
The cloven feet of Pan are on the hill,
His reedy music's sadder than sad rains,
Since none will seek—pipe ever as he will—
Those unanointed and neglected fanes.

Beauty and joy—the bread and wine and all—
We have forsworn; our noisy hearts forgot;
We stray and on strange altars cry and call . . .
Ah, patient gods, be patient with us yet;
And Pan, pipe on, pipe on, till we shall rise,
And follow, and be happy, and be wise.

HAD I FORGOTTEN

By John Russell McCarthy

HAD I forgotten, or only dreamed awhile,
The fair strange sea that never ceases calling?
Her mighty heralds she sends me, file on file,
Great trumpeting heralds, with their white-caps falling.

Had I forgotten, or only dreamed a space,
The sea, my mother in ancient mighty days?
I must go back to greet her timeless face
And walk an hour in her ageless ways.

A PASTEL OF VIENNA

Matinée at the Hofoper

By Helen Woljeska

THE footman in his fur-trimmed livery jumped off the box and opened the carriage door. There was a great deal of laughing, rustling, scrambling, and then they all stood on the sidewalk, in velvet coats, with picture hats, fluffy hair and rosy faces.

"*Vite, mesdemoiselles,*" said the governess nervously, "*venez vite, il fait un vent glacial—*" and she led the way up the broad marble stairs.

But mesdemoiselles were not in any hurry. Archly ogling all around—at fashionable carriages, officers in gay uniforms, beautiful ladies, sweet little girls and sweeter little boys—mesdemoiselles walked slowly, gracefully, heads erect, perfectly conscious of their beauty and style, these little women, not ten years old.

The lights were still up as they entered their box. The wide interior of the opera house was ablaze with dazzling light. And in that sea of light swam many, many people, many, many faces, each with its little universe of joy, and grief, and guilt.

Mesdemoiselles sat down, dignified, haughty, the governess back of them like a black guardian angel. Mesdemoiselles looked through their opera glasses, recognized friends, bowed, blushed, smiled, whispered to each other. In the imperial box they discovered a solitary youth, dark, smooth-faced, in simple uniform. "It must be an archduke! Perhaps one of those we saw in Reichenau last summer? He is very handsome. . . . But look over there, in the pit, yes—Rudi and the others with their English tutor. Ah, now they see us!" The young ladies and gentlemen bowed to each other with perfect grace and dignity.

Suddenly the lights die out. The music bursts forth, brilliant, rapturous—and the beautiful curtain slowly, slowly rises. Ah! A fairy palace, glittering and glistening in magic illumination. Slender palms and large-leaved bushes with glowing exotic flowers. In the foliage flutter jewelled butterflies and strange tropical birds. And with rhythmic grace the ballet enters—dainty gilded fairies and graceful elves, sinister gnomes and mischievous vixens, fire sprites, and the black horrible ogre—oh, it is beautiful, beautiful—it seems like a dream.

"And do you know—those are real children who do the acting! How I envy them! What fun it must be, to dance every night, so beautifully masqueraded, and be admired by everybody! And when they grow up, they are real actresses—ah!—and live a life of joy and love and roses—!"

"Truly, Valerie," whispers Yella importantly, "everybody likes that kind of a woman—just everybody! I can tell from the way people talk, papa, and uncle, and all, you know. Oh, yes. While goody-goody people—" she leans far over and speaks very, very low—"old maids, like our governess—why, everybody makes fun of them. Yes, Valerie. Even papa and mamma, Valerie!"

Between the acts the young gentlemen come to call on the young ladies. And they converse, and court, and

flirt with keen enjoyment. It is really too bad that the play begins again and they have to part.

The music starts once more, very low, moaning, mournfully. Something sad is going to happen now, surely! They are all tense. Valerie heaves a deep, trembling sigh.

Then she leans over to Yella. "Why do you pretend you love Rudi, when I know you don't?" she asks gravely. "Or *do* you?"

"Love him!" laughs Yella, "of course not! But when I grow up I want to be his countess. . . ."

"I—" whispers Valerie dreamily, "I —would rather be a *grande amoureuse*. . . ."

STUDY IN SENTIMENT

By Russell A. Hartman

WITH trembling hands she picked up the letter from her former sweetheart. Both remorse and indignation seized her as she studied the familiar handwriting. Remorse that he could be nothing more than a memory; indignation that he should attempt to intrude again, knowing that she loved her husband and was happy.

If it was an invitation, she wondered if she could refuse, remembering how quietly he always took refusals.

Then the thought that—not being able to forget her—he might have done, or might do, something rash caused her to grow cold with fear. Feverishly she tore open the crushed letter. The note was brief. It read: "I have decided to run for Congress. May I rely on your support at the polls?"

THE subtlety of woman is beyond all understanding. To-day, for instance, she is trying to impress one with her mental powers by riveting one's attention on her stockings.

PROFITEER—A manufacturer who charges a labourer, who is getting four times what he used to get, twice what an article used to cost.

THREE SWALLOWS, CLEAR!

By Donal Hamilton Haines

I

"THREE swallows, clear, dear!" Rita Sherrod stretched out her hands and took the coffee-cup which her husband held out to her across the breakfast table, tilted the silver pot and then waited tensely.

She knew exactly the point to which John's third cup was to be filled; there was a blue band around the inside that marked the proper level. But he was never content to leave it wholly to her sense of accuracy; at the critical moment he always gave a little warning exclamation.

It came now.

"There!"

She stopped pouring and handed him the replenished cup. He lighted a cigarette and vanished behind the ramparts of the morning paper. For several minutes the only signs of his presence were the little puffs of smoke which jetted up above the top of the paper.

Rita remained motionless, making tiny yellow balls out of a fragment of muffin.

Neither her expression nor attitude betrayed the tension which lay close to the surface. She might have been easily planning her day's activities or idly following some pleasant train of memory.

As a matter of fact she was fighting back an impulse to cry out, to hurl something brittle and heavy that would make a deafening crash, to do something to break the choked, thwarted sensation which oppressed her. She would have done it but for a cold certainty that the outburst would not accomplish the relief it promised. Whatever this strange incubus which had settled upon her proved to be, she was quite certain that it could not be dispelled by anything so simple as girlish hysterics. She must keep herself in hand until after John had gone.

This morning it seemed as though he would never finish his preparations for departure. Their number and unchanging sameness had never so impressed her. When finally his kiss—slightly redolent of shaving-powder and Turkish tobacco—had been bestowed and returned, she could have screamed with the sensation of relaxed tension.

She wanted to drop into the biggest and softest chair in the living-room and sit there for hours with nothing but her mind active, yet she did not do so. She had discovered that a wasted hour after breakfast meant a congested domestic schedule, a feverish haste lasting through the day, and a badly planned and worse dinner. There was a great deal of hard thinking to be done, but it must be done to the accompaniment of the succession of household duties.

Introspection was a mental process which Rita had never heard defined by name, and with whose nature she was almost equally unfamiliar. At infrequent times in her life she had indulged in brief fits of what she called "thinking things out." They had been so rare that even now she could recall the details of most of them. The last had occurred when she was compelled to choose between John Sherrod and Richard Alden. Like all the others it had been a purely objective process; she had not probed among her inmost

feelings, but had compared the visible qualities of the two men with merciless thoroughness, and made her decision.

Now she knew that she was confronted by another occasion for swift and unhesitating decision, and that it was quite different from the others she had faced.

She was bewildered and a little frightened. Something had happened to her. It was still formless and undefined, and she must, somehow or other, arrive at an understanding of its nature before she could do anything else.

She stood beside the breakfast-table thoughtfully fingering the blue-and-white cup in which the dregs of coffee and the ash from her husband's cigarette had formed an unlovely paste. It was perfectly absurd, and yet everything seemed to centre about that harmless bit of china. She could not tell when she had first been conscious of that feeling of irritation at John's way of holding out the cup, and the unvarying remark which accompanied the gesture.

They had been married two years, and he had certainly asked her for "Three swallows, clear!" some hundreds of times. There was nothing in either the act or the speech to irritate a normal human being, and yet the oft-repeated phrase had come to grate on the raw edges of her nerves until this morning it had seemed past all endurance. Something had made her flinch as though the innocent request had been a physical blow.

What was it?

She considered first the obvious outward aspects. Could it be that there was anything actually wrong with her? Did horrible nervous breakdowns begin that way? She did not believe it. Never in her life had she felt more splendidly healthy, enjoyed with greater zest everything she did. And her family had always been famed for its total lack of nerves. Yet there it was! She could not shake it off like the persistent effect of a nightmare. She had only to close her eyes and visualize the breakfast table to feel again that tormenting, prickling sensation which seemed to be just beneath her skin.

By the time she was half-way through her morning's duties, Rita had pretty well stripped the occurrence of all the sensible supporting facts which might have explained it, yet it stood, stubborn and unyielding without their assistance, refusing to vanish just because it was inexplicable. There was nothing the matter with either her mind or her body; there was nothing in John's harmless habit to justify its effect on her, but her direct-moving mind demanded that it have a cause. Rather desperately she drove her mind in a fresh direction with somewhat surprising results.

"Perhaps it's John!" she muttered.

The instant she had leaped to this conclusion she experienced a startling feeling of satisfaction and relief. It was almost as though she had yielded to that impulse to do something violent which had assailed her at breakfast, and had found in it the vent she had so terribly needed.

Placing on John the blame for her own condition seemed to restore her balance, to provide her with a direct and easy path straight to the heart of what had threatened to be a baffling mystery. Within the space of a few seconds (the time required for dusting the top of the piano and putting away the scattered sheet-music, to be exact) John's guilt had changed from a despairing and doubtful hypothesis to an established truth whose very details began to resolve themselves into concrete form.

That extended cup which had come to be a part of the breakfast ritual, the terse phrase which was so nearly a command, thrown out as it was without so much as a raising of the eyes from the columns of the paper, was the most characteristic action which John Sherrod performed in the course of the day. It was his whole personality condensed into three words and a gesture!

He was a neat, orderly person. In Rita's eyes—during the time when she had been making up her mind between him and Dick Alden—this quality had seemed a shining virtue.

John's inherent neatness had made Dick's carelessness the more glaring and undesirable by contrast. And since their marriage her husband had lost none of that exemplary orderliness. Indeed, it had been a veritable blessing to her. He never left masculine litters of any sort for her to clear away, he was never in doubt as to the whereabouts of a single one of his possessions, the immaculate state of his bureau drawers shamed the occasional confusion of her own, and he had been positively a spendthrift in the purchase of vacuum-cleaners, washing-machines, and other efficient, labour-saving devices for her benefit. She had never had to concern herself about the state of his clothes, the security of his buttons, and his promptness at meals.

It was now borne in upon Rita that a virtue might be carried to such a point that it became a vice. It was comforting to know that if John pre-empted the kitchen-table for repairing his fly-rod, every particle of the mess would be removed before he left the room, and the white enamel top of the table if anything cleaner than when he commenced operations.

It was just as satisfactory to know that at precisely a quarter to six every night the door would open upon his return from the office.

But suddenly to encounter the bitter realization that in her husband's eyes she was of a piece with the accurate and dependable alarm-clock which woke him in the morning, or the thermostat which intelligently governed the flawless furnace was positively maddening.

Yet the truth was only too evident. He *knew* that at a certain moment during the twenty minutes devoted to breakfast she would be in the chair opposite him, her own meal finished, with nothing to occupy her except the immediate gratification of his desires. He didn't *need* to glance up from his paper as he held out his cup; her presence, her instant readiness to pour his coffee were as assured as the rising of the sun!

II

Like many another ardent discoverer, Rita Sherrod came close to making rash mistakes. In the emotional ecstasy of the moment it was easy to leap to unwarranted conclusions, to take too much for granted, to believe that the discovery of the evil was equivalent to its cure.

The full truth flashed upon her just as she was attaching the cord of her vacuum-cleaner to the floor-plug, which Sherrod's discerning eye had placed in the exact spot where it would render her the maximum of service. She paused, the plug dangling from her fingers.

"Suppose," she mused, "that I should get out of my chair and slip out of the room just before he finishes his second cup and lights his cigarette. He'd never notice my going." (This wasn't true, but Rita was thinking too swiftly to be logical.) "Then when he stuck out that hateful cup I wouldn't be there to take it!"

The idea was tempting. It had about it a flavour of positive audacity.

Rita flushed as she made the admission. To think that it actually required *daring* just to interrupt the trivial daily routine of one's own husband! But it did. Interrupting the Swiss-watch schedule of John's day was like stopping a town-clock or flagging an express train just to make it late.

Yet, for two reasons, Rita abandoned the plan.

If she tried to carry it out, she would have to begin with a cold-blooded, unemotional discussion with her husband, the mere thought of which positively frightened her. There might come a time when she was ready for such an encounter, but it had not yet arrived.

Not more than half-a-dozen times during their married life had she and John discussed matters about which they had a serious difference of opinion, but her memory of these one-sided contests was only too fresh and humiliating. In such encounters she had to admit that she was no match for Sherrod. His

mind was a positively hateful organism! He always had accurate knowledge with which to oppose her guesses, facts (often with tedious details of statistical figures!) against her theories, and finally, a half-paternal, half-professorial manner which was about as effective as it was maddening.

If she let herself be involved in argument about anything as impalpable and elusive as the discovery she had just made, she would be so much clay in his hands. Bad enough when they were discussing anything as hard and definite as the price of a fur-collar; infinitely worse when the subject was a hazy idea, about which Rita had as yet only feelings instead of thoughts.

Her second reason for abandoning the plan was more satisfying, though perhaps not so logical.

She decided (after some minutes of pondering during which the cleaner remained idle, its dust-bag hanging limp and flaccid with an air of thwarted virtue) that just breaking the breakfast routine would not be a sufficiently violent and impressive piece of tactics. It might—though she was none too sanguine even on this point—arouse John to a realization of what he had done, but this was by no means all that Rita required.

Her desire, which grew stronger every moment, was for a complete and rather melodramatic declaration of independence. She wanted to hurl some sort of a psycho-spiritual bomb. Henceforth she was determined to be something more than a perfectly functioning cog in John's well-oiled universe. Such a convulsion could not be achieved by mere failure to see an extended blue-and-white coffee-cup—at least beginning it in such a way would not give her that sense of immense satisfaction to which she felt she was entitled.

Here opened a vista of possibility so breathlessly alluring that Rita shamelessly trundled the cleaner back to its lair under the stairs, and stretched out on the *chaise longue* to do full justice to the temptation.

She turned over in her mind one mad scheme after another, vexed that her imagination seemed so barren of adventurous suggestions. By degrees her thinking became less chaotic and more constructive as she began to realize the limits within which she would have to work. She must plan and execute single-handed; there was not a woman to whom she could turn for help. As for a man—

Rita caught her breath sharply and stopped thinking in order to feel more thrillingly. She had been searching for desperate measures, startling tactics, and in a single leap her mind had pounced upon the perfect solution—another man.

There was evidently a single *tertium quid* at her disposal: Dick Alden. But he was surely the one best fitted to play the rôle, the one on whom she could most completely depend.

Having endured some months of his courting, she felt that she knew him at least well enough for her present purpose. She had not seen him a dozen times since her marriage, and these encounters had all been of the most casual sort. But no woman, however happily married and thoroughly in love with her husband, permits herself to lose all track of an old flame if she can help it. Rita possessed a very fair store of information concerning Alden's existence since the moment when she had definitely said "no."

He had continued to live in indifferent rooms—which were probably as badly kept and disorderly as ever—and to paint an immense number of careless, hasty sketches which sold readily for small sums, instead of the few really good pictures he might have done had he been willing to sentence himself to hard work. (Rita liked to believe that exactly the opposite would have occurred had she married him.) He was as intermittent in his work, as unstable in his apparent interests, as distressingly careless in his dress and habits as ever. Since his affair with Rita he had paid no marked attentions to any other woman. That he was still in love with her she took for granted.

Even in the first and most exciting moments of her plot-laying, Rita was a good deal of a conservative. She had no thought of a real affair with Alden, first because she didn't really want to flirt with him, and second because at heart she was a little bit afraid of both men. Given an inch, Dick was all too likely to start in headlong pursuit of the proverbial ell, and she didn't at all fancy the pictures which her imagination painted of John's conduct under such circumstances. She wanted no more than a suggestion of a flirtation, enough to bring John to reason without making Dick hard to handle.

For all her timidity, Rita was inconsistently eager for immediate action the instant her mind was made up on a given point. She lunched hurriedly from a kitchen table which was still in disorder at noon for the first time since her marriage, her mind wholly occupied with her plan.

She knew that Alden was likely to be alone in his rooms about the middle of the afternoon, that period being the brief segment of the day inviolate to his painting. She would go to his studio at half-past two. As an excuse she would commission him to paint something for the wall-space over the piano, whose blankness had always distressed her. She would not stay more than ten minutes at the outside. Then, instead of going directly home, she would have a deliberate shopping tour which would make her late. John's dinner would be delayed. After that the course of events could not remain wholly in her control, but she felt that she would have made herself ready for anything which might happen.

After an uneasy hour spent in final deliberations, she dressed with more haste and less care than she could have wished, and left the house a few minutes after two. As she passed through the rooms on her way to the door, she dared not look either to right or left; it seemed to her that every neglected household task had assumed bodily form and was glaring at her with accusing eyes.

III

RITA had to walk half a mile to reach the block of cream-coloured brick apartments where Alden lived. Not until she was actually on her way did she realize that she had completely ignored one possibility. Her visit might be witnessed by any number of people who would be sure to draw the most lurid inferences from what they saw. Absurd as it was, she had considered no one but John, Dick and herself.

The terror resulting from the discovery would have wrecked the whole adventure had it not been outweighed by an even livelier fear—the horror of defeat. She knew that if she stopped now and returned to the house, every drop of her new-found courage would ooze away. She would surrender herself to the tyranny whose existence she had just discovered. If the revolt was to be made at all it must be made now. She had to go through with it!

The ornate entrance of the apartment building seemed a sheltering sanctuary into which she darted gratefully, comforted by the thought that she had seen no one she knew. An elevator was waiting, but she chose the greater security of the stairs, although four flights of them lay between her and Alden's rooms. After she reached the fourth floor she had to wait a little to recover her breath and to brace herself for the encounter, which seemed much more difficult now that she stood on the very edge of it.

Dick's rooms—a living-room, bedroom, studio and bath—stood at the far end of the corridor, and Rita saw that the door was open. She had a momentary flash of guilty hope. It was just like Dick to go out and leave the door of his rooms wide open behind him. If he was out, there was no use of her waiting—! Then, quite clearly, she heard him whistling at his work in the studio beyond the open door.

Once more she yielded to her desire for immediate action.

She walked swiftly down the hall and knocked sharply on the panels of the

open door. The whistling stopped instantly.

"Come in, and step high," came Alden's voice. "There are boots and truck on the floor, and I'm afraid it's deucedly dark."

She obeyed him literally.

The room was in semi-darkness, but she caught a blurred glimpse of shoes and clothing strewn about the floor and chairs. A heavy curtain separated the room from the studio.

Rita pushed this aside, and then stood blinking in the sudden glare of light from the big north windows.

Richard Alden sat working at his stool, keeping the smoke out of his eyes as he painted by means of an amber cigarette-holder fully a foot in length. He was a large, heavy man, whose increasing tendency to gross fleshiness was even more apparent in his smock and slippers than it would have been in street clothes. He was clean shaven, and his large features were full of those contradictory qualities which enabled him to keep the respect of friends and enemies alike even while they knew perfectly well that he was no more than half the painter he might have been.

At the sound of Rita in the doorway he thrust his big, round face out from behind the canvas, and then stared at her with as near an expression of complete surprise as his features were capable of revealing.

"Well, Rita!" he exclaimed.

The tone might have meant anything, certainly committed him to nothing, and had the immediate effect of driving from the woman's mind the speech which she had rehearsed a dozen times. Her silence, which she could not break, robbed her of any chance of dominating the situation she had so confidently created, put her absolutely at Alden's mercy. He did not leave his seat, but continued to fix her with his disconcerting stare.

He was not being deliberately rude. It was his habit to meet every contingency of life from the angle of his own interest, and he had no innate chivalry sufficient to overthrow his habitual action. Rita's appearance in the doorway created at once the problem of disposing of her, and he attacked its solution without giving a thought to her comfort of mind or body. She stood, one hand on the casing, waiting for him to speak.

"Since you have committed the incredible folly of coming here," he remarked, "there is no use of your standing there poised for flight. You might as well come the rest of the way in."

She came through the doorway, then paused again for the simple reason that there was no visible place for her to sit.

The artist got up heavily from the tattered arm-chair in which he was working, swept a three-legged stool clear of a pile of draperies and odds-and-ends, then dropped back into his seat.

"This is a hideous blunder," he went on, "which I thought you too much of an artist to commit. If this sort of thing were to be between us, it should have happened months ago or not until years hence. Now it can be neither a pose nor a necessity for either of us, and so is quite indefensible."

"You're not being very kind," Rita protested.

"Kind!" exclaimed Alden, with such violence that he dropped the cigarette-holder, which broke into pieces at his feet. He stared ruefully at the fragments without bothering to pick them up, merely grinding out the glowing coal of tobacco with the heel of his slipper.

"That is the sort of thing that begins happening to a man when a woman loses her sense of proportion!" he said in a complaining tone. "Smashes, big and little!—What made you come here?"

Rita made a desperate effort to piece together the broken bits of her pitiful explanation.

"I came," she faltered, "about a picture—"

"Stuff and nonsense!" he interrupted without a shred of pity. "I will do you the kindness to think you a clumsy dissembler rather than the hopeless sentimentalist your presence here would

otherwise brand you. I don't know the precise nature of the teapot-tempest that sent you scurrying here, and I'm not at all sure that I want to. I can't easily imagine Sherrod as a brute or you the victim of your own indiscretion. I don't know whether you're still in love with me or not, but you think that I am with you, don't you?"

Rita was silent.

This was so utterly different from anything she had expected that she could find no words.

"That's a characteristically feminine mistake which it becomes my duty to correct," Alden went on without giving her time to collect her scattered wits. "Let me assure you that your presence here doesn't give me the slightest thrill. My pulse is beating at a distressingly normal rate. The rectitude of my conduct derives no virtue from a temptation manfully resisted. Two years ago you had the wisdom to refuse me, but since then the wisdom seems to have passed to my side. What have you to say for yourself?"

"I don't know!" she confessed wretchedly.

"I thought as much," was his unfeeling comment. "There was a time when I bitterly resented your cool level-headedness. I can't believe that you have wholly lost it. Life with Sherrod shouldn't have worked that. You have either come to me for counsel, which is folly, or to compromise both of us, which is nothing short of criminal. In either case you have defeated your own ends, because you force me to battle either for my own good name or for our joint reputation. You leave me no choice. I can do nothing but smuggle you out of here with all possible despatch."

"I'm sorry I came!" wailed Rita.

"Don't cry!" he commanded sharply. "The admission does you credit, but you can't be seen going out of here with red eyes. Do you know anybody else in the building?"

"No."

"Of course you wouldn't! Did anybody see you come in?"

"I don't think so."

"Incredible luck! You haven't left any tearful note for Sherrod telling him that you've fled to the arms of the only man who understands you, or anything of that sort, have you?"

Rita's crushed spirit suddenly bristled.

"Of course not!" she flashed out.

Alden nodded approval of her altered manner.

"The situation improves," he declared hopefully. "Now the thing for you to do is to go out at once and in the most casual manner possible. It's an hour most unfashionable for assignations, a fact heavily in your favour, and also a time of day when our mutual friends and potential traducers are likely to be safe at home. The chances are a hundred to one against your being found out, for which I insist upon holding my blamelessness rather than your luck responsible.

"All the way home you will be abusing me with all the vituperative expressions at your command. You will call me an insensate brute, dead not merely to sentiment but to every consideration of decency. I haven't petted you, comforted you, been sorry for you, even permitted you the safety-valve of tears. But in the fulness of time, although you end by disliking me even more heartily than you do at this moment, you will be forced to admit that I have the clear, cold wisdom of a masculine Minerva! If you don't mind, I'm going to let you find your own way out, and if you encounter anybody in the hall I advise you to ask for Mr. Terwilliger, for I'm sure no such person lives in the building."

Obedient as a child, Rita rose from the stool and gathered her skirts about her for the hazardous passage of the living-room. As she did so, someone tramped down the corridor, and a loud knock sounded at Alden's door. She gave him a frightened, questioning look.

"The devil!" he exclaimed. "I don't live up to the reputation of my trade. I've no neat hiding-places for petticoats! Get behind that angle of the wall while I see who it is."

Rita crossed the room and flattened herself against the wall where an angle hid her from sight of the doorway. Here she stood, panting a little and listening intently. She heard Alden's heavy, unwieldy tread, an involuntary exclamation and then—John Sherrod's voice!

IV

SHE put a hand to her lips to stifle the cry which rose to them, her brain sick and dizzy from the sudden effort required to convince herself that this was grim reality and not the absurd tangle of a dream. John never came home at this hour. He could not possibly have discovered her absence nor guessed where she had gone. Yet there was no other way in which his presence at Alden's door could be explained. They were the merest acquaintances, having nothing in common; she was even sure that they actually disliked each other. Through the humming in her ears her husband's voice reached her.

"I dare say you're wondering what brought me here, Alden," Sherrod was saying, "and I'm afraid you may be even more puzzled when I've explained the object of my visit."

"I'm pretty well case-hardened against shocks," answered the painter. "Come in, if you won't mind the muss. I'll give us a bit more light."

In her corner, Rita heard the scrape of chair-legs on the floor and the flutter of a window-shade being raised. At least they were not coming into the studio!

"I've come to you for advice," Sherrod began abruptly.

"Which is either the wisest or most foolish thing a man ever did," added his host.

"It's about Rita," Sherrod said, with a curious lack of diffidence.

"Obviously," the artist replied dryly. "But before you say anything further, I want a word. You're not a cad, Sherrod, but what you're doing is the act of one. You're breaking your own habit by acting upon impulse, and the chances are you'll regret the slip most damnably. I say this because I'm so prone to act upon impulse myself, and I don't suppose any man spends more time than I do in vain regrets. Now fire away if you still care to."

"Thanks, I believe I will in spite of your warning. There's something gone wrong quite suddenly between Rita and me. I wish with all my heart that it were my fault, but I'm afraid it isn't. For that reason, I can't handle it."

"Why not?"

"Because I should have to make accusations and Rita would assume the defensive, which would ruin everything. The cure must be effected without her guessing that there is anything to be cured."

"That's infernally subtle," objected Alden.

"I don't want to be subtle," Sherrod disclaimed. "Here's the case. Rita is altogether too completely domesticated. She's positively subjugated by the house. I don't like it. Yet there's nothing I can do to check a development that's a perfectly natural growth, though it is in the wrong direction. If I complain I'm deliberately opposing a domestic virtue. She's got to be shocked out of it, and I want you to provide the shock."

"Sherrod," exclaimed the other man, "you're a monster!"

"I am nothing of the sort. I am simply going about being a good husband in an unusual way."

"You are," Alden maintained, "committing an appalling series of intellectual and spiritual outrages. You are insulting Rita and me in the same breath by asking me to make love to her. Why, man, it's beastly! Don't you realize that I'm probably still in love with her?"

"Don't be absurd!" Sherrod retorted sharply. "You know perfectly well that you never were in love with her, and that I shouldn't have come to you if I hadn't known it."

There was a short pause during

which Rita held her breath, certain that Alden must be gathering his forces for an angry outburst. She couldn't help feeling his answer something of a discomfiture.

"I beg your pardon, Sherrod," he said thoughtfully. "I have always done you the injustice of completely underestimating your intelligence. Please go on."

"This morning," continued Sherrod, "my wife was closer than she realized to braining me with a very solidly built coffee-pot. She didn't know that I guessed her feeling. As a matter of fact, I had engendered it. She is in desperate need of an outburst of some sort. I was prepared for it; I was actually ready to dodge the pot if she flung it. She didn't. What's more, she never will. She can't lift herself to that height of revolt. I have failed. My most persistent efforts—such as reiterated phrases and tediously repeated actions — have accomplished nothing. That's why I've come to you for help."

"Such as making love to her behind your supposedly unconscious back?" suggested Alden.

"Not necessarily. It's quite possible that your advice will be all I need."

"I'm glad you think so," confessed the painter, "because that's precisely my own view. Were you by any chance in love with some other woman before you married Rita?"

"Yes. Several. Why?"

"Because it's highly probable that at this moment Rita is closeted with one of them talking to her much as you're talking to me."

"Impossible!" cried Sherrod. "She's incapable of such an act. She's—"

"Hold on!" Alden interrupted "Do you suppose there's the faintest chance that she suspects your presence here?"

Rita could fairly hear her husband's jaw go slack with astonishment.

"By George!" he exclaimed wonderingly.

"Nobody," resumed Alden with a manner which grew more pedantic as he proceeded, "so thoroughly understands the puzzling subtleties of married life as the single man or woman. No husband or wife could possibly have advised you. Married people have no perspective; they don't in the least understand the significance of their own experience.

"You and Rita are cherishing identical delusions about each other. There's nothing even faintly wrong with either of you, except the almost ineradicable diffidence of the spirit, which is the bane of many an otherwise happy pair. There is such a thing as a coy soul; the spirits of men and women have the same differences of fibre, of impulse, of inhibition as their bodies. Your soul and Rita's have been hanging back blushing from the first collision as bashful lovers, for all their passionate eagerness, flinch from the first embrace. The thing for you to do, as you've probably already guessed, is . . ."

There were sounds of movement, the words grew vague, then ceased, and Rita realized that Alden, with a delicacy which his first manner had not led her to expect, had gone out with her husband and left her to make her escape without having to face him again.

It was perhaps no more than human for Sherrod to telephone home that night that he would not be there for dinner, and to ask Rita not to wait up for him. Neither of them, in all truth, was quite ready for the ordeal. Besides, the dénouement must inexorably take place at the breakfast-table.

Rita precipitated it. She could not wait for John's third cup but asked, as she tilted the silver pot—

"Three swallows, clear?"

He stared at her, leaped from his chair, strode round the table and took her in his arms.

"Thank the Lord!" he exclaimed, "now let's have it out!"

THE FIRE IS OUT IN ACHERON

By Maxwell Anderson

THE fire is out in Acheron,
And where it burned the centuries
Have swept in loam, and set thereon
A grove of lime and laurel trees.

And all the gods to whom we turned
With prayer and grief and dulcimer
Lie fallen, broken and unurned,
With Proserpine and Lucifer.

The woods are dark; the dark is still;
The dancers tremble at a breath;
And they will tire of their own will
And puzzle over love and death,

And snatch a terror from afar,
A horror from the misted fen,
And, frightened by a falling star,
Dig up the sunken gods again.

ALL wives are sure of their husbands. Some are sure of one thing and some of another.

IT is when conversation lags that conjecture advances by leaps and bounds.

THE best thing about wealth is that it enables one to buy kisses de luxe.

WOW

By W. B. Seabrook

I

ONE summer evening, a sentinel who stood leaning on his spear at the entrance to the Han Ku Pass —for this was many years before the building of the Great Wall—beheld a white-bearded traveller riding toward him, seated cross-legged upon the shoulders of a black ox.

Said the venerable stranger, when he drew near and halted:

"I am an old man, and wish to die peacefully in the mountains which lie to the westward. Permit me, therefore, to depart."

But the sentinel prostrated himself and said, in awe:

"Are you not that great philosopher?"

For he suspected the wayfarer to be none other than Lao-tze, who was reputed the holiest and wisest man in China.

"That may or may not be," replied the stranger, "but I am an old man, wishing to depart from China and die in peace."

At this, the sentinel perceived that he was indeed in the presence of the great Lao-tze, who had sat for more than a hundred years in the shadow of a plum-tree, uttering words of such extreme simplicity that no man in the whole world was learned enough to understand their meaning.

So the sentinel threw himself in the ox's path, and cried out:

"I am a poor and ignorant man, but I have heard it said that wisdom is a thing of priceless worth. Spare me, I beg you, ere you depart from China, one word of your great wisdom, which may, perchance, enrich my poverty or make it easier to bear."

Whereupon Lao-tze opened his mouth, and said gravely:

"Wow."

After which he ambled westward in the twilight and disappeared for ever from the sight of men.

As for the poor sentinel, he sat dumbly scratching his head, saying over and over to himself in puzzled, uncertain tones, "Wow. Wow! Wow?"

For this absurd monosyllable had precisely the same meaning in ancient Chinese that it has in modern English, which is another way of telling you that it had no meaning at all, and that Lao-tze might just as appropriately have said, "Poo," or "Ba," or "Oh, hum."

But the sentinel, who imagined himself the possessor of some mighty incantation, went about his affairs as one demented, secretly repeating the strange word twenty thousand times a day, expecting with each breath that his wife would suddenly become young and beautiful, or that his hut would be transformed into a palace, or his spear into the ivory baton of a mandarin; until finally the exasperated captain of the guard took note of his strange mooning and muttering and had him beaten on the soles of his feet until he confessed the whole story of his encounter with Lao-tze.

And that was the end of the unhappy sentinel, for he died from the beating, but in due time the captain reported the saying of Lao-tze to the governor of the province, and eventually it reached the ears of the emperor.

II

Now the emperor cared more for the happiness of his subjects than for his own ease, and was accustomed to seek wisdom that he might apply it to better the condition of his people; so when he learned that the great Lao-tze's valedictory to humanity had been "Wow," he called his vizier and bade him consider the mystery.

The vizier engaged in a holy meditation on "Wow" for forty days and nights, after which he returned to the emperor and spoke.

"O Son of Heaven, doubtless it has often chanced that while engaged in the hunt, you have seen two vast companies of lions, arrayed in martial order, maiming and slaying each other in mighty battle."

"Never in my whole life," replied the astonished emperor.

"But surely, then, O Son of Heaven, you have noticed when coursing wolves, how certain of the pack are accustomed to act as slaves and burden bearers for the others."

"You know very well that I have never seen such a sight," answered the emperor, "but what I do see plainly is that my vizier has taken leave of his wits."

"I beg forgiveness, O Son of Heaven," persisted the vizier, "but I am at least convinced that you have observed how certain animals imprison others of their kind in chains and dungeons; how certain ones starve amid plenty; and how all the beasts of the forest, save a divinely favoured few, are compelled to engage in heavy, life-long toil."

"It is with the deepest pain," interjected the emperor in a tone of exquisite politeness, "that I shall now call in the executioner to cut off your honourable head, but I am comforted by the reflection that this will probably cause you only a slight inconvenience, as you seem already to have lost the use of it."

"My poor unworthy head will be too highly honoured, O Son of Heaven, but harken yet once again ere you decree my death. You have never seen such things as I have described, because the animals, whose communication is limited to 'wow,' or 'Baa,' according to their kind, live naturally and simply as God intended; while man, who alone among God's creatures has invented speech to his confusion, is the only being afflicted with wars, prisons, slavery, poverty, and sorrow.

"This is the hidden meaning concealed in the mystic utterance of the wise and holy Lao-tze:

"Abolish Language, and man will return to primal simplicity and happiness."

"A most excellent idea, and I forgive you," replied the emperor, "for while the abolition of Language may not accomplish all you say, it will at least put a stop to the incessant chatter and quarrelling of my wives."

So presently heralds were sent throughout all China, with an imperial decree that Language was to be abolished in the empire, beginning with the first day after the Festival of the Full Moon, and that thereafter none might say aught but "Wow," on pain of death.

The people obeyed.

III

And so there dawned on China an era of simplicity and peace—a Golden Age, in which wars ceased, and industrial bondage and exploitation disappeared, for without spoken or written language they could no longer exist. Desires grew fewer. Each family tilled the soil just sufficiently to supply its own simple wants. Husband and wife, father and son, neighbour and neighbour, dwelt together in harmony and peace, for none said aught but "Wow," and hence all were agreed.

Laws were no longer necessary. Though there were armour and weapons, there was no occasion for donning them. People no longer roved about, for they were everywhere content. Though there were ships and carriages, there was no occasion to use them. Where two villages lay close-together, separated only by a little hill, the voices of their cocks and dogs were

mutually heard, yet people came to old age and died with no desire to go from one village to the other.

And the emperor, who had grown very old, lived as simply in his palace as his people in their villages, for his empire was no longer a burden on his shoulders, and was governed perfectly because it was not governed at all.

But in the meantime there had been born in a distant village a child with an impediment in his speech, who, as he grew to manhood, endeavoured to say "Wow," but could only say "Wo." At first he was ashamed and envious, but later he persuaded himself that his incompetence was a virtue and that his blemish was a mark of superiority, and whenever he heard people saying "Wow," in the contented, old-fashioned way, he would puff out his chest and ostentatiously cry, "Wo," at the top of his voice, until finally he made himself such a nuisance that he was driven out of the village with sticks and stones.

When he arrived in the next village, where they knew nothing of the impediment in his speech, and stood in the market-place saying, "Wo, wo, wo," the people arose and would have slain him, when suddenly one of their number, who like the rest had been content to say "Wow" all his life, suddenly took his stand beside the stranger and began to shout vehemently, "Wo! Wo! Wo!" And presently, strange to relate, half the village was imitating him.

Strangest of all, they immediately became discontented, and driven by an irresistible restlessness, abandoned their tranquil firesides and began to wander about the country, as in the old days, travelling in ones and twos and companies, arrogantly clamouring, "Wo, wo," spreading amazement, quarrel, and dissension.

All this began in a far-off province, and did not come to the ears of the emperor, who continued to live peacefully year after year in his palace, until one day the door burst open and his ancient vizier appeared, bent with age and exhaustion, covered with dust and sweat.

The emperor was greatly astonished, and uttered an amazed "Wow," for the vizier had departed to his native village nearly a century before, and the emperor had never expected to see him or have need of seeing him again.

"O Son of Heaven," cried the old man in a trembling and unaccustomed voice, "the time for saying 'Wow' has reached an end, for a marvellous thing has come to pass. On the great plain which lies not far beyond the palace walls are two vast armies, armed with scythes and clubs and stones—and they of one army are furiously screaming 'Wow! Wow! Wow!' as if they had gone mad, while they of the other army, with equal fury, are replying 'Wo! Wo! Wo!' Each army is trying to outshout the other, and if they come together in battle the rivers will run red with blood, for their numbers are constantly increasing, and town is arrayed against town, village against village, family against family, brother against brother."

At these strange tidings, the emperor raised himself with difficulty from his couch, and with trembling hands lifted the lid of a massive chest from which he drew the sacred imperial robe of yellow and gold, embroidered with the emblem of the Great Dragon. His vizier's robe of state he also drew forth, and when the two old men had vested themselves in the panoply of power and wisdom, supporting each other, arm in arm, they tottered out of the palace.

When they came to the Yang Shi Bridge, outside the walls, they saw that the waters of the river were running red.

As they stood sorrowing, they heard a confused shouting, and beheld two remnants of the battling armies, the one in pursuit of the other. And it appeared that there would be fresh slaugnter at the river's edge. But when the two onrushing bands espied the emperor and his vizier, they gave over flight and pursuit, stopped stock still, and ceased their shouting.

The aged emperor stepped forward, raising his arms in a gesture that was at once paternal and majestic, and would

have spoken. But straightway he was greeted with an angry chorus of "Wows" and "Wos" which were so mingled in the din that they sounded precisely alike to his astonished ears. And shouting thus together, for the moment, at least, in perfect harmony, they seized the emperor and his vizier, tied them together with a huge stone around their necks, and threw them headlong into the crimsoned river. After which, they remembered their former quarrel, and resumed their mutual slaughter.

And when the yellow moon rose, it shone, as of old, upon human strife and fields strewn with the dead, while naught remained of the emperor and the vizier and Lao-tze's holy wisdom save a few empty bubbles floating on a river of blood.

THE WALL

By Eugene C. Dolson

AT odds with Love, she built a goodly wall around the garden of her heart;
And the wall was so well built that Love could not enter,
And so high that the sun could not look in, and the garden was lit only by
A dim cold twilight, where no flower could grow.

POLITENESS is the art of doing something that is a nuisance in order to please persons who are still worse nuisances.

WHEN love dies, it isn't buried. It is cremated, and the ashes are put in the tin box with the marriage licence.

THERE are two sorts of fame. One is acquired by gaining a reputation; the other, by losing one.

JOHN MILES' STENOGRAPHER

By Nan Apotheker

I

JENNIE SAYRE looked up from her notebook with that immemorial air of the stenographer waiting for further words of wisdom to fall from the oracle's lips. But her gaze held more than the usual blank suspended animation. She was looking at John Miles for the thousandth time with the valuing, appreciative study one gives to a well-loved, precious thing.

She was taking in that splendid head once again, the features so admirably spaced, that impression of superabundant vitality held in leash. How many times she had sat there so, listening to the easy flow of his language, appreciating some especially good phrase, gloating over a perfect word, wondering just how he was going to encompass some difficult passage and recording it triumphantly when, as she knew he would, he came upon the inevitable rendering.

For Jennie, curiously enough, was a passionate lover of words. A wrong one hurt, an almost right one tantalized, and the right word satisfied deeply some inner sense. And Jennie in her busy little brain was continually engaged in carrying on a fascinating conversation with an imaginary vis-à-vis—a conversation that dallied with mere cleverness, plunged into the depths of the deliciously profound, emerged to skate lightly on thin surfaces, and played dexterously with many-coloured fancies.

She found her brilliant opponent invariably taking the form of John Miles. Even now in the short interval while the telephone engaged his attention, she found herself having afternoon tea with him in a quaint old tearoom. She was pouring for him daintily, thoroughly familiar with the exact strength of the brew, the exact proportions of cream and sugar which he preferred. He was saying:

"Jennie, what could be a mellower, kindlier custom than this? It warms up the heart, melts down all mental rigidity, creates an atmosphere of fine intimacy. Give me luncheon for business talk, dinner for social conversation, but tea for heart-to-heart causerie."

And Jennie, sipping delicately, meets his eyes over the rim of her cup and agrees: "Yes, I, too, find myself classifying men into those I'd like to lunch with, dine with, or tea with. . . ."

"It's a function that sets off a woman prettily enough, too. You're rather wonderful always, but particularly fine so, with your head tilted sidewise, your eyes quite intent and grave over this serious business of pouring, your hand a beautiful ivory against the dark, gleaming porcelain of the teapot."

Jennie, as always, blooms under the warmth of his admiration. A sense of power comes upon her. At this moment she knows it is wonderful to be a woman, to stimulate and inspire a strong and worth-while man. But she must parry his compliment lightly; it would be too crude to show how deeply she was stirred.

"Do you suppose, then, that women have coddled and encouraged the tea habit only to furnish themselves with an attractive background?" she smiles.

"If they have, we are the gainers and their debtors in any case. . . ."

But the actual John Miles, turning

from the telephone, cuts in on Jennie's reverie.

"Shall we go on with our letter, Miss Sayre?" he says.

Jennie from long practice finds it easy to slip back into her everyday shell.

"Never mind," she promises that other one. "We'll go on with our talk soon enough."

Her busy fingers fly along the page; he pauses seeking a word; Jennie knows the exact one he needs but doesn't dare suggest it; it comes to her lips clamouring to be said, but she banishes it sternly. He finds another and goes on to the end.

Jennie gathers up her pencils and book and goes out to the bustling office, and all the while that her typewriter clatters on its way she is off again on her private dreams. Now she is in John's car. He is driving—Jennie close at his side, wonderfully happy. They came to an inn.

"Let's have luncheon here," says John. "We're too late for Mrs. Fredericks'. Let's telephone. I'd much rather be with you alone anyway."

Jennie agrees. She always finds John's suggestions quite charming. The inn is lovely, with a suggestion of old England hovering about it. There's a brick fireplace with shining andirons, a gleaming brass pail and shovel, the rafters are low, the floor red brick, the tables and chairs dark-stained oak. Somehow the grilled chop, the bursting baked potato, the chunky apple pie, the coffee are all perfectly right.

They are in a playful mood.

"I want to take you upstairs to the old attic," says John, "open the trunk we're sure to find there, and adorn you in the brocades and satins and fineries that inevitably go with old trunks in old attics."

"There used to be an attic in my home," says Jennie smilingly. "And even an old trunk or two—but I'm afraid they contained only father's discarded trousers, and moth-eaten blankets, and shares in a defunct oil company."

Jennie never minded alluding to her poverty-stricken past. It accentuated the loveliness of the shining present.

"Oh, if it comes to that," says John gaily, "I never did suppose there were beautiful things enough to go round for all the old trunks in the stories."

"Fancy having all the place to ourselves, John. Even the waiter has disappeared. One could get up and play tag in and out of the tables and no one the wiser."

"One could kiss you unseen, and one will, seeing that opportunity may not knock for another five minutes, and that, in lovers' parlance, is at least five years," —and John does that, his kiss giving her the same thrill that it never fails to give, be it playful, tender, or passionate.

Luncheon is over, they've been driving along silently—she absorbed in her wonderment at life's having given her so much in this lover of hers; he thinking how appreciative, how companionable, a girl his Jennie is.

They come to a beautiful meadow, gleaming with field-flowers under so gaily blue a sky that they must stop. They find a place under a beckoning tree—and in a tender mood they begin to talk of life and love and work. She tells him that she wants to write a book.

"There never has been an honest revelation of a woman's inner life," she says. "Women are too vain, or too self-conscious, or too cowardly to write such a searching personal analysis. One of these days, I'd like to record the thoughts, the emotions, the obsessions that have possessed me since my early girlhood—to write them without self-consciousness or fear. But, of course, there must be more than honesty to justify it—there must be artistry."

The man nods.

"Yes—it should be done, Jennie, and I think you'll be able to handle it, too. . . . You've known, haven't you, that before I plunged into the vortex of business affairs, I wanted to write? But there was something too active, too conflict-loving in my nature to allow me to sit by and record—though I do love to find words for things."

They talk on, confiding their inner-

most selves. A sense of their love for one another comes upon them. John Miles takes the girl into his arms, kisses her again and again, tells her how dear she is to him. Her heart leaps high with happiness. She knows that she will always have this perfect love.

As for Jennie's everyday self—there were times when a fierce enough hunger for reality came upon her. She'd harbour daring projects such as taking advantage of a quiet moment alone with him to say some of the things that were in her mind; or perhaps an even rasher act such as throwing her arms about him just to startle him . . . but, of course, she did none of these things. The outward Jennie had very little courage.

II

And John Miles? . . .

There was a night when Jennie was dining with her brother at a famous old hotel. Sitting at a table very near her were Miles and another member of the firm that employed her. This other, a Mr. Summers, saw Jennie and remarked:

"Look at the girl sitting at the table near the mirror, John."

Miles looked.

"Don't know her," he said.

Summers laughed:

"You're funny—think of looking at a girl every day for four years, and not recognizing her. That's Miss Sayre, your stenographer, you dub."

"Oh, yes—a dull, colourless little thing—you could hardly expect me to know her out of her setting. . . . Capable, though," said Miles absently—and his mind swung back to the project they were discussing of installing dictaphones and doing away with stenographers.

THE real difference between the sexes is this: that in the case of a man the head is more important than the hat.

AN autobiography is a book in which a man tells what he would have said and done if he had thought of it in time.

A MAN may love many, many times, but he never marries until his luck changes.

A CYNIC is one who is married to his first love.

THE END

By Ralph B. Cooney

FOR eight years, now, I have been trying to pass as a humorist. I've thought up hundreds of jokes and limericks. I've planned scores of practical pranks. I've manufactured thousands of puns, wheezes, *mots*, and repartees.

But at last the realization has been conveyed to me that in spite of all my efforts, I am not really funny after all. A theatrical producer has just asked me to prepare the libretto for a musical comedy.

KEEPSAKES

By Frances Avery Faunce

FAIR things my mind will not forget
Cling to me like an amulet,
Translucent jewels I may wear,
Pure diadems to crown my hair.

Days I have known shine like a gem,
I cannot tell the worth of them;
I only know they give my dress
A certain sapphire loveliness.

And when I lay them off at night,
The rays still burn so clear and bright,
Their brilliance is the love I keep
To grace the golden hours of sleep.

CHRISTIANITY teaches a man to spend the best part of his life preparing for the worst.

A CYNIC is simply a man who has been successful in love.

POPOPEEKA

(A COMEDY IN ONE ACT)

By Lawrence Vail

CHARACTERS

REGINALD FRENCH, *a young-looking man of forty.*
MARIAN FRENCH, *his wife, aged thirty-two.*
POPOPEEKA, *a savage girl of fourteen.*

SCENE: The beach of a desert island, somewhere in the tropics. To the right MARIAN *is unpacking a small boat of a number of miscellaneous articles saved from the wreck. To the left sits* REGINALD *propped against a cocoanut tree. He appears very bad tempered and is puffing intermittently at an empty briar pipe. Their clothes are the worse for salt water and wear.*

REGINALD

(*Surlily.*) Any tobacco?

MARIAN

(*Serenely.*) Not yet, dear. (*Enumerating articles as she unpacks.*) Two boxes of dog biscuits. A tin of asparagus. Think of the parties we'll be able to give. A feather duster. A photograph of Manuel of Portugal. What a pity he's gone out of fashion. And look at this pillowcase. What wonderful lace—real Venetian. It must have belonged to that ugly lady from Paris. You know who I mean. The one who had two children, a poodle, and was trying to flirt with the young Australian botanist. I've always wanted one of these.

REGINALD

Well, you've got what you want. And nobody will take it away from you.

MARIAN

That's the trouble. Half the pleasure in having pretty things is to make other people jealous. That's one reason why I enjoyed having a good-looking husband. (*She continues to unpack.*) Two coat hangers. Three pairs of silk socks. They are too thin for you, Reggie. You must let me have them. It's too warm on this island for stockings, and I don't suppose the conventions are very strict. A box of chocolates? A package of toothpicks. . . .

REGINALD

Oh, damn!

MARIAN

What's the matter, Reggie? I won't use them if you object.

REGINALD

(*Furiously.*) You can pick your teeth all day if it amuses you. But I can't stand your attitude. Surely it's hardly the moment to be flippant. We shall probably be here till the end of our lives. Haven't you any tact?

MARIAN

If anyone heard you, Reggie, they would never believe you were in love with me.

REGINALD

Perhaps they would not be wrong.

MARIAN

What a horrid thing to say. But I know you don't mean a word of it. If you did not love me, why did you save me? You nearly lost your life because of me. Your precious masculine life!

REGINALD

(*Meditatively.*) I wonder why I saved you.

MARIAN

I confess that I was never more astonished. I thought you would rescue that silly little Miss Turner with whom you had been flirting all the way over. I'm not usually jealous, yet I did feel something when I saw you hugging her on the promenade deck just before the ship went down. I was floating around in the water at the time. I thought I would never see you again. And I do like having the last word.

REGINALD

I'm sure you were thinking of only one thing—how to save your own life.

MARIAN

I admit I was not jealous long. For a moment I wanted to scream, make a scene, then I forgot about everything. There was that horrible feeling of water stifling me, outside and inside, and my breath hammering to get free. After that I remember nothing till I found myself here, on this beach. You were moving my legs up and down, like weights in a gymnasium. (*She pauses.*) Oh, Reggie, it is good to be alive. Life is wonderful, whatever they may say in society. You were a darling to save me. (*She approaches to kiss him.*) My hero!

REGINALD

Don't touch me!

MARIAN

Do you really hate me? Isn't it wonderful? And here we are, alone on this island. Nobody will ever come between us.

REGINALD

There is no one like a woman for cheering a man when he's gloomy.

MARIAN

So you really hate me? Sure you are not playing with me? (*She sighs.*) Men are so insincere.

REGINALD

Marian, you're ridiculous. You know you don't care for me.

MARIAN

Whoever put that idea into your head?

REGINALD

Has the salt water gone to your brain? Have you forgotten that you were going to divorce me to marry that young Polish violinist? Not that I object—I never objected. You must admit that I did everything in my power to make it easy for both of you. I even compromised myself with Mrs. Hicks. And you know how she bores me.

MARIAN

(*Meditatively.*) Isn't it strange? I had forgotten all about Vladimir. And yet I suppose I was in love with him. He played so divinely. And he did make love exquisitely. He made even your love-making seem amateurish, Reggie dear. And now he means nothing to me. If he came strolling up the beach it would have no effect on me. No more than if my uncle turned up, or the man who presses your trousers. It would not even disturb me to learn that he was in love with another woman. I love you, Reggie. You have been such a hero. You risked your life for me. These attentions flatter a woman.

REGINALD

I want you to understand that the fact that I saved your life does not alter the situation in the least. It does not bind

you to me, still less does it bind me to you. I had drunk too much champagne at lunch. And later I was panic-stricken. You surely would not take advantage of a moment of hysteria?

MARIAN

Well, if you insist on divorce, why can't we be divorced now?

REGINALD

Divorced now? Here? Who, I ask, you, is going to divorce us?

MARIAN

How often have I heard you say that you do not believe in the ceremony of marriage. You have called it an obsolete rigmarole, convenient for the ignorant masses, but unworthy of superior minds. If a man and a woman love each other, you have said, they can marry themselves before nature. You have insisted that that sort of marriage was more sacred than any ceremony. Well, why can't it be the same of divorce? (*She rises dramatically.*) I call the sea to witness, and the sun, and this coconut tree, that I consider myself divorced from you, Reginald French. Now stand up and divorce me.

REGINALD

Don't be a fool, Marian. Don't you see that that barbaric formula of yours is as much of a ceremonial as anything else? I thought you were above such vain phrases.

MARIAN

(*Sitting down disconsolately on the sand.*) You're right. I suppose I'm old-fashioned. Probably that's why I married you, for the ceremony. I liked the bridesmaids, the service, and the fuss in the papers.

REGINALD

So you admit that you are old-fashioned? In my heart I always suspected it. And yet why did you pretend to be a modern woman? Why did you make speeches in public advocating that woman wear trousers?

MARIAN

I did those things to please you.

REGINALD

(*Puzzled.*) To please me?

MARIAN

I felt that I owed you something. I thought that I should make an attempt to adapt myself to your views because I did not happen to love you. (REGINALD *starts.*) Out of compensation, you know. Of course, I had other reasons. I'm not bad-looking. I cut quite a figure at the parades. And as for advocating trousers for women. Well! (*She draws up her skirts.*) Isn't it almost a crime to wear skirts with these legs?

REGINALD

(*Angrily.*) Do you mean to say that you were not in love with me when you married me?

MARIAN

Of course not. Did you ever think so? Perhaps, after all, Vladimir was right when he said I was a clever woman.

REGINALD

(*Melodramatically.*) To think that I have lived ten years with this woman!

MARIAN

I don't see why you are so indignant. Now I love you, and you loathe me. I'm not bitter about it.

REGINALD

Ten years! Under the same roof!

MARIAN

(*Looking up at the sky.*) You needn't trouble about the roof any longer.

REGINALD

Ten years! And I never knew you!

MARIAN

Of course you never knew me. You're only a man. You never could get out of yourself. Not that I blame you; it's the nature of the sex. They

say that we women are always looking at ourselves in the mirror, but you men never look anywhere else. And if you do see a woman reflected now and then, it is not the actual woman you see, but merely her relation to you. You see *your* wife, *your* sweetheart, a woman whom *you* might love, a woman who might be in love with *you*. As to the real woman with her needs and desires, you do not even know that she exists.

REGINALD

I suppose you think yourself clever.

MARIAN

No, I leave it that to you. I am merely sincere. There's nothing like a desert island for clearing things up. It brings us back to fundamentals.

REGINALD

So our married life was a farce.

MARIAN

All life is a farce. The best thing we can do is to choose the least unbecoming rôles.

REGINALD

Well, you have certainly opened my eyes.

MARIAN

You should have known. Remember I never was jealous of you.

REGINALD

I never gave you cause.

MARIAN

Don't pretend. What about Mrs. Lisk? And didn't I go to my sister at the time to give you more freedom?

REGINALD

(*Ingenuously.*) I thought Alice needed you.

MARIAN

It's easy to believe what one wants to believe. But don't think I'm reproaching you. I didn't marry you for your love. By giving me the benefit of your name and position you fulfilled your share of the bargain. It may sound absurd—but I liked you better when you were interested in some woman. You needed petting more than most men. You see, you had no vices—you neither gambled nor drank. You can't imagine how irritable you were when you were not in love. You grumbled about everything. You don't know how I suffered.

REGINALD

Would you be jealous if I fell in love now?

MARIAN

Jealous! I'd go mad. I'd kill the woman.

REGINALD

(*Savagely.*) Oh, you needn't worry. You have me at your mercy. (*He glances wildly about him.*) It doesn't seem likely that I'll fall in love here, does it?

MARIAN

(*Insinuatingly.*) Oh, yes, you will.

REGINALD

With whom, please?

MARIAN

You'll fall in love with me, Reggie dear.

REGINALD

Never.

MARIAN

Are you sure, Reggie? Never is a very big word. Even I do not promise ever to hate you. But you must come to love me. Not to-day, not to-morrow, perhaps not even next week. I'm in no hurry. There's plenty of time. No one is likely to interrupt us.

REGINALD

That shows how little you know me. Have you ever known me to break my word?

MARIAN

So that's it—is it? You refuse to love me merely out of pride, just to show me how stubborn and indepen-

dent you can be. You won't keep it up, Reggie. Think of the long days that are coming, of the long nights. You'll feel lonely. Think of the hours when you'll want to talk I promise to listen to you. I promise to tell you how clever you are.

REGINALD

You little fool!

MARIAN

Go on, darling, insult me. I don't mind if it makes you feel better. (*Rapturously.*) He falls in love with me, marries me, loves five other women, decides to divorce me, rescues me, and then calls me a fool. Oh, what an adventure! All with the same man, too. Isn't life exciting? I wish I could write.

REGINALD

(*Almost inarticulate with rage.*) I . . .

MARIAN

Don't work yourself up, dear. Why don't you lie down and take a nap? You look tired. (*She rises.*) I think I'll go inland and dress.

REGINALD

Yes . . . Go and put on your black tulle and have your nails manicured.

MARIAN

I'm going to wash and tidy my hair. I'll be ever so much more attractive when I come back. Good-bye. (*She blows him a kiss and goes away.*)

(REGINALD *paces the stage furiously, then throws himself down against coconut-tree. Gradually his eyes close and he dozes off.*)

(*Enter* POPOPEEKA. *She is a thin, small, black savage girl, with curly black hair, white teeth, and skin like shiny black oilcloth. She looks sleepily out to sea, stretches her arms, yawns. Suddenly she sees* REGINALD, *starts, takes two steps toward him.*)

POPOPEEKA

Ou. Ou. Wa-wa-wa-wa-wa. (REGINALD *opens his eyes and stares at her as though at an apparition.*) Ou. Ou.

REGINALD

(*Takes situation in rapidly. He rises with alacrity, his face brightening with pleasure.* POPOPEEKA *runs to opposite side of the stage.*) Don't be afraid, little chimney pot. I'm not going to hurt you.

POPOPEEKA

Ou. Ou.

REGINALD

(*Sitting down against coconut-tree to reassure her.*) A pity you don't understand my dialect. I was educated at Harvard—in America. They speak a language which sounds often like English.

POPOPEEKA

Ou. Ou.

REGINALD

(*Good humouredly.*) Wee-wee-wee-wee. (POPOPEEKA *approaches timidly.*) I wonder what I've said. She seems to like it. Wee-wee-wee.

POPOPEEKA

(*Smiling very happily.*) Wee-wee. Sh-sh-sh-wee.

REGINALD

Swee. Shwee. Pretty child, aren't you? I always thought people exaggerated the charms of white skin. I always preferred black meat in chickens. (*He rises and strokes her arm.*)

POPOPEEKA

Shwee. Wee-wee.

REGINALD

Listen to her purr! And I thought I was tired of women. There's nothing like a change of colour for rejuvenating the blood.

POPOPEEKA

(*Rubbing her head against his shoulder like a cat.*) Shwee. Shwee.

REGINALD

Wee. Shwee. Affectionate—aren't you? Well, anyhow, you don't talk too

much. Or, if you do talk, you talk more sense than any woman I've ever known. (*He scratches the back of her head.*) Nice girl. Wow. Wow.

(*As* REGINALD *says "wow"* POPOPEEKA *throws herself on the ground. She trembles and moans.*)

REGINALD

Good heavens! What have I said? Really, darling, I never meant it. It's my confounded American accent. When I was a little boy a big boy taught me bad word. But I'll never say "wow" again. Wee-wee-wee. (*She ceases to moan and looks up hopefully.* REGINALD *caresses her.*) Of course I meant to say wee. Wee for ever and ever—till the fishes drink up the sea. Wee—little ink well. (*He lifts her to her feet.*) Come! Smile! (*He dries her tears. He looks around and sees a box of candy.*) Try one of these. Wee candy. Makes one feel swee inside. (*He puts candy in* POPOPEEKA'S *mouth. She swallows it whole and starts to cough.*)

POPOPEEKA

Ou. Ou.

REGINALD

(*Affectionately.*) Little tar lady must not swallow candy so quickly. (*He slaps her on the back.*) There. That's better. (*He kisses her. She returns kiss noisily.*) Eh . . . not so stupid . . . little black devil. I never thought I would like kissing again. (*She kisses him more noisily.*) More quietly, little coal girl. Marian might hear. Softly—like this. (*He kisses her several times and then releases her.*) Now, no more kisses to-day.

POPOPEEKA

Ou. Ou.

REGINALD

And no more ous. Now tell me your name. I—(*He strikes himself on the chest.*)—Reggie. (*He repeats manœuvre a number of times.*) Reggie, Reggie, Reggie.

POPOPEEKA

Weggie.

REGINALD

Good. Weggie will do. I never like the hard "r." I—Weggie. You—(*He points to her.*)

POPOPEEKA

(*Suddenly understanding.*) Popopeeka.

REGINALD

Popopeeka. I like the name. Weggie wee swee Popopeeka.

POPOPEEKA

(*Beaming.*) Swee. Swee.

REGINALD

I understand. Popopeeka loves Weggie wee shwee. Now run along home to mother.

(POPOPEEKA *does not understand.* REGINALD *leads her off the stage. He returns a minute later looking very elated. Enter* MARIAN.)

MARIAN

What's the matter? You look good-tempered.

REGINALD

(*Very amiably.*) I have been thinking things over, Marian. It seems to me that as we are fated to remain some time at this resort we should make an effort to agree. If you don't ask too much of me, I don't mind you being in love with me.

MARIAN

(*Puzzled.*) What's come over you, Reggie? Have you found some tobacco?

REGINALD

No. I've been thinking. That's all.

MARIAN

(*Suspiciously.*) You're hiding something. Has anything happened?

REGINALD

Nothing. It merely seems silly to quarrel. (*He puts his arms around her.*)

MARIAN

(*Touching his forehead.*) Sure you haven't a fever? You should not go to sleep in the sun.

REGINALD

Never felt better in my life.

MARIAN

(*Suddenly.*) Is there another woman on this island?

REGINALD

(*Troubled.*) Don't be a fool.

MARIAN

I haven't lived ten years with you, Reginald, without learning something about you. Whenever you were particularly affectionate toward me, I knew you were in love with someone else. I did not mind then, for I was not in love with you. (*With a quick rush of anger.*) But I won't put up with it now.

REGINALD

You're delirious, Marian. How could any woman . . . ?

MARIAN

Has that horrid little Turner thing been washed up by the tide? If you pull her legs up and down and bring her to life—I'll never forgive you.

REGINALD

I assure you, Marian . . .

(*Enters* POPOPEEKA. *She stops, startled, when she sees Marian.*)

MARIAN

Oh, that's the girl, is it? A black thing, too. Oh, you men are revolting. But I'll settle her. What business has she on this island?

MARIAN *rushes toward* POPOPEEKA *and shakes her violently.* POPOPEEKA *takes situation in rapidly, and with a wild series of "ows" tries to bite* MARIAN. REGINALD *pulls them apart.*)

REGINALD

(*Sternly, to* POPOPEEKA.) You sit down there. (*He forces her to sit down against the coconut-tree.*) Now don't move. (POPOPEEKA *looks as though she is going to cry.*) Wee-shwee. (POPOPEEKA *smiles, settles herself comfortably.*) (*To* MARIAN.) What do you mean by attacking a poor defenceless child? She has more right than you on this island. She was probably born here. You're only an immigrant.

(MARIAN *throws herself on the beach and starts to moan.* POPOPEEKA *smiles very placidly. She is busied, during the following dialogue, in spitting on her knees and polishing them.*)

REGINALD

Oh, these women! I expected to find peace on this island, and it's just like home. (*Fiercely.*) Stop crying, Marian. Are you trying to drive me insane? (MARIAN *sobs.*) If you don't stop this instant I'll go away with Popopeeka. (*She stops crying instantly.*) I see no reason why the three of us should not live together in peace. You can train her as a maid.

MARIAN

(*With tears in her voice.*) And have you make love to her—I suppose. I wouldn't mind if she wasn't so black. But I can never be as black as she. Not if I lie out in the sun all my life. I can't compete with her.

REGINALD

Don't talk nonsense.

MARIAN

(*Half sobbing.*) And when you're tired of her, you'll fall in love with her sister. And when you're tired of the sister you'll fall in love with her mother. And when you've had enough of the mother you'll love her grandmother. It doesn't matter how old one is when one is black. Men can't tell the difference.

REGINALD

(*Humouring her.*) Don't you know that I love only you?

MARIAN

But you said (*sob*) half an hour ago (*sob*) that you hated me.

REGINALD

I was nervous. If I didn't love you, why did I save you?

MARIAN

I wish I were at the bottom of the sea. Why did you save me to treat me like this?

REGINALD

(*In despair.*) I promise that I love you—you only.

MARIAN

Then let's pack the boat and go to another island.

REGINALD

I don't know if there is another island around here.

MARIAN

Then will you promise me never to speak to Popo . . . Popo . . . what's her name?

REGINALD

Popopeeka.

MARIAN

Will you solemnly swear never to speak to Popopeeka again?

REGINALD

You're absurd, Marian. I'm likely to run into her at any time on this island. I hate being rude.

MARIAN

Oh, I see, you're in love with her. (*She sobs.*) And I was going to be so happy. I was going to make you love me. I had six infallible plans. (*She breaks into loud sobs.*)

REGINALD

(*Desperately.*) I'll promise anything you wish.

MARIAN

Then kiss me.

(REGINALD *kisses* MARIAN. POPOPEEKA *rises angrily.*)

POPOPEEKA

Ow. Ow. Ow. Wa. Wa.

REGINALD

Good Heavens! Are you also jealous? I thought you savages were civilized and believed in polygamy.

POPOPEEKA

(*Crying very loudly.*) Ow. O . . . w.

REGINALD

(*Impatiently.*) Sit down, will you?

POPOPEEKA

Ow. Ow.

REGINALD

Stop crying. (*He forces her to sit down.*) Wee-wee-wee-shwee. (POPOPEEKA *smiles.*) That's a good girl. Now Marian . . . (*He turns to find* MARIAN *entirely composed. She is eating chocolates.*)

MARIAN

Reggie, I have an idea.

REGINALD

(*Furiously.*) An idea! At this hour! Have you no sense of proportion?

MARIAN

(*Serenely.*) It's a sensible idea.

REGINALD

(*Impatiently.*) Well—out with it.

MARIAN

An hour ago, Reginald, I divorced you. Will you divorce me now?

REGINALD

You're behaving like a spoilt child.

MARIAN

If you don't do what I say I'll make a scene.

REGINALD

(*Impressed.*) All right. Anything for peace. I divorce you.

MARIAN

Will you repeat what I say? (*He nods resignedly.*) By the sun, and by the sea, and by that coconut-tree, I

consider myself divorced from you, Marian Butterfield.

REGINALD

(*Making an effort to be patient.*) By the sun, and by the sea, and by that coconut-tree, I consider myself divorced from you, Marian Butterfield.

MARIAN

Now tell that girl to come here.

REGINALD

Marian . . . I don't see . . .

MARIAN

Call her here.

REGINALD

(*Shrugging his shoulders.*) Come here, Popopeeka. Wee . . . Wee. (*He beckons and* POPOPEEKA *approaches holding her head very high.* MARIAN *takes her hand and joins it to* REGINALD'S.)

MARIAN

Now, Reggie, repeat what I say. Before the sun, and the sea, and that coconut-tree, I, Reginald French, take this woman, Popopeeka, to wife.

REGINALD

(*Angrily.*) I'm damned if I'll marry the chimney pot—not even to please you.

MARIAN

(*Threateningly.*) I'll make a scene.

REGINALD

Oh, very well, then. (*Pretending to take the matter humorously.*) Before the sun, and the sea, and that coconut-tree, I, Reginald French, take Popopeeka to wife.

MARIAN

(*Releasing their hands.*) Now you two are married. I waive the formality of her accepting you, Reggie. (*She curtseys to* POPOPEEKA, *who stares at her insolently.*) How do you do, Mrs. French. (*To* REGINALD.) And now, Reggie dear, I'm an unattached woman, free as the wind. I also happen to be the only white woman on this island. (*To* POPOPEEKA.) Be careful of your husband, Mrs. French, he has an inclination to flirt. He always had a leaning towards divorcées. I'm at home every Thursday, between five and seven. Charmed if you'd call. (*To* REGINALD.) I am also at home after dark now and then—to white gentlemen—but I don't receive their wives at that hour. Good-bye.

(MARIAN *blows the couple a kiss and goes away.* REGINALD *stares after her furiously.* POPOPEEKA *takes hold of his arm and turns up her lips. He thrusts her aside, and she falls, moaning, on the ground.*)

CURTAIN

IN the old days a clever girl nailed her beau by offering to show him how to tie his necktie. Now she nails him by offering to show him where he can get a safe dry Martini.

AT THE CURB

By Vincent Starrett

THUS, Life, a ribald pageant, struggles by
(Who pauses at the curb may see it pass):
These cloaked gallants, with lewd, appraising eye,
These little priests, with beads of ebon glass;
This hooded woman, and that singing fool,
Yon haggard kings, and kingly vagabonds;
These maidens wet from trysting at the pool,
And dead men, lately drowned in lily-ponds . . .
They surge and flow; their banners catch the gleam
Of ancient sunlight, and immortal tears . . .
O bubble faces in the turgid stream!
O voices whispering down a million years!
Under each changing helm, my image lies;
Under each hood, your bright, unchanging eyes.

WOMEN and mathematics should be left half-learned. Profound knowledge of either begets contempt.

SOME men are husbands merely because some women disliked to be called old maids.

NO man is a hero to his own wife; no woman is a wife to her own hero.

THE SACRED STORY

By J. B. Hawley

I

IN the province of Shen-si, in a little village so small that it is never named on any map, the Honourable Li Quong nightly gathers certain of his cronies and spins them yarns of that barbarous Western World where once he spent a decade of his life.

Li Quong is an old man now and with the piling up of his years has come a shortening of his memory. He often forgets that he has told this tale or that and repeats them in all their wealth of detail. But there is one which he never forgets that he must *not* tell. To Li Quong, even in his dotage, it is still the Sacred Story and not to be profaned by being poured into strange ears.

Time was when Li Quong moved in higher circles than that formed by the gathering of the elders in his native village. Once he was acquainted with the great ones of the earth: with the Emperor's chancellor in Pekin, with the ambassadors from other nations, and in London and Paris and Berlin with those fortunate individuals who rule the state and those still more fortunate ones who rule the rulers.

In a small way he, himself, had been one of the great ones. In his middle age had he not been under-secretary to that remarkable statesman, Wong Fu, who had startled the world with the subtlety of his diplomacy?

He had rather fancied himself as an observer of his fellow-men and of those ways of foreigners differing from the ways of China. He had kept little notebooks in which he faithfully recorded all that he saw or heard. In the last of these that he ever penned may be found the following entry:

"Beauty knows neither time nor place."

Then follow two lines from the book of some forgotten Chinese singer of songs:

"Eyes soft as the petal of the lily.
Tiny hands fluttering deliciously . . ."

That is all. Yet it is the most important entry in the book. It marks the date of his meeting with Phyllis O'Rell.

II

SHE was beautiful, was Phyllis O'Rell. Pleasantly tall and slender, and graceful like the waving grasses bordering the rice fields. Her hair was gleaming gold, her eyes violet wells of unimaginable depths. Outwardly she was all that a man could ask. Inwardly—

Her father was a Torrington—one of the bad, mad Torringtons of Suffolk. Her mother a French dancer who had set Paris by the ears until the English milord had married her and carried her away to share his quasi-respectable life in London. Phyllis, the only offspring of this union of the English aristocracy and the French stage, inherited the recklessness of her father and the wilfulness of her mother, both of which qualities had never been curbed from the time she could toddle and was able to lisp "I won't" and "I will" at a scandalized nurse.

The man she married when governesses had given her up in despair and she had been sent home in disgrace from

three finishing schools, was not the man to change her. Tommy O'Rell was a decent fellow, but he had no way with women. He was the sort that never outgrow their shyness before the opposite sex and lose their strength of mind when confronted by an unruly petticoat. He loved his wife but he was content to stop there. He never tried to rule her. So through a half-dozen of London seasons she went her way untrammelled, dominating the women by the strength of her will, the men by her beauty.

When Li Quong met her in the stuffy, overheated ballroom of the Duchess who eventually spent her way into the Bankruptcy Court, Phyllis O'Rell was at the apex of her power. She laughed impudently as the Chinese under-secretary bowed over her hand and murmured her name after the man who had presented him.

"My word," she drawled, "here is a surprise. A Chinaman who can say O'Rell. I thought no Chinaman could say *r*, Mr. Li Quong."

And the dozen men surrounding her laughed as though she had said something really funny. Li Quong laughed too, although at the time he rather hated himself for laughing.

To an extent this beautiful foreign woman had made him lose face before her men and he resented it. Perhaps had he not been looking into her eyes, he would not have laughed but would have taken on that impassive expression indicative of offended Oriental dignity. But with that glance into her laughing eyes he felt that a mysterious bond had sprung into being between this stranger and him—a bond which ruled his mere surface emotions. So he, too, laughed at her insolent pleasantry. And that night he went home to dream about her.

There are men of all races who are head over heels in love weeks and months before they themselves know it. Li Quong was of this school of lovers. Although Phyllis O'Rell was in his thoughts day and night for a fortnight, he did not recognize the nature of his feeling for her. Then of a sudden it came to him that she was the standard by which he judged all women. And then—well, then he knew.

The knowledge that he loved Phyllis O'Rell upset Li Quong. It took him several days and nights spent in lonely meditation to get used to the astounding fact. Only then was he able to accept it and go about his regular ways of life.

From the beginning he realized that his passion was hopeless. He looked the facts squarely in the face. He was a Chinaman, a yellow man, and the woman he loved was a white woman of a class and type incapable of thinking of a man of his race except as a being a little inferior. Furthermore, she was married and in his simple interpretation of English laws and customs, that too put her beyond his reach.

Love is a strange desire. For its gratification it demands one of two things which are the direct antithesis of each other. The lover to be content must either receive—or give. He or she must be standing with open hands into which are flowing gifts material, sensual, or spiritual—or the hands must be pouring forth whatever of value the lover has to give.

Li Quong could never hope to be of those who receive. After only a little consideration he admitted that fact and accepted it bravely. The woman of his heart had neither love nor favours to give him. Glorifying her as he did, it seemed wonderful to him that she had even a good-humoured tolerance to bestow upon his unworthy self. So the hands he had thrust forth in the hope that something might be given him were instantly withdrawn only to be thrust forward again immediately in the gesture of giving. And lo, with dismay, Li Quong saw that his hands were empty.

For besides his love which was unwanted, what had he to give Phyllis O'Rell? Of things material nothing, even had she been willing to receive them. Of companionship, sympathy—he smiled sadly when he thought how little she needed these things from anyone, least of all from him.

He was very unhappy. For a while, life lost all savour and became a nau-

seating potion. In his waking hours there was neither joy nor content. Only in his dreams did he find moments of happiness. For in the land beyond the borders of sleep he had the power to gratify the urgings of his love. There he could give freely, joyfully.

As his unhappiness grew, so did his worship. In the petted, spoiled, thoroughly selfish Phyllis O'Rell he imagined qualities so beautiful that they moved him to a sort of dumb awe when he was in her presence. All unknowingly, when he was with her he made himself just a little ridiculous.

The impossibly clever Cranford woman, who observed everything and talked too much about what she saw, noticed his adoration.

"'Ware the yellow boy, Phil," she said one day. "I am sure that he has the most outrageous designs on you."

Phyllis laughed as she glanced across Mrs. Miltern's drawing-room into the pleading, adoring eyes of the Chinaman.

It was this same Mrs. Cranford who opened Li Quong's eyes and showed him the real Phyllis. It is impossible to say what her motives were in doing this. She was the kind of woman who is always doing all sorts of unnecessarily unkind things for apparently no reason at all.

Like everything else that she did, her education of Li Quong was accomplished in a subtle manner. She arranged situations that were bound to bring out her dear Phyllis' worst points and took care that the Chinaman was present to see his idol display her feet of clay. She relied upon Li Quong's powers of observation eventually triumphing over his prejudice. In the end her method justified itself. Slowly, painfully, the Chinaman received vision. He struggled, argued against, denied the evidence of his own senses but to no avail. In the end he had to admit that inwardly his beloved did not equal nor even approach her outward perfection.

Strangely enough this disillusionment did not lessen the strength of his love. But it filled him with a great bewilderment. He was puzzled that now that the flower had lost its perfume it did not become merely a weed to him. He knew that his love was not a thing based on either admiration or lust for physical beauty. And yet—well, in the first days of his awakening, it seemed to him that Phyllis O'Rell had only her physical beauty to present.

For long hours he sat and pondered over the problem. One night from out of the clouds of smoke encircling him, the answer to the puzzle came.

He saw pictured in the wreaths of smoke the words of Li Shan, not the least wise of the disciples of Confucius: "Only the eagle can call to the eagle, only the rat to the rat."

And he knew that something beautiful in the mad, selfish woman he worshipped had called to the beauty in him which had created his love. He argued that it was her soul, sleeping as the gorgeous dragon-fly sleeps on the rotting lily pads, that had murmured a message which his own soul had heard.

III

In those days there was a social event in the Great World that topped all others. Lord Barriscale's cruises to the Mediterranean are with his Lordship forgotten in the present generation. But then they counted more than audience with the King himself. To have been one of Barriscale's guests was to have been given *entrée* into London's most exclusive set—a set from which more than one duchess had been barred by the eccentric old nobleman who was its ruler. But aside from its social significance there was another reason why everyone desired to be a guest aboard the *Esmeralda*. It was the extremely ordinary wish to have a good time—which was something Barriscale's guests always had.

To be asked to join the yacht when London fogs began to thicken was the one social triumph Phyllis O'Rell had never achieved. And because she was very human it was the thing she wanted most in all the world. It doesn't matter how she finally obtained the invitation, but obtain it she did after four years of waiting. She was elated beyond meas-

ure and gave herself whole-heartedly to the preparation of her wardrobe.

Two months before the *Esmeralda* was booked to sail, Tommy O'Rell came a nasty cropper on the hunting field. A nag that he had ridden for two seasons took it into her head to turn nasty and threw him on the wrong side of a bristling hedge. He emerged from the hedge not greatly injured in his body but with the sight of both eyes gone.

For a little this untoward event in the bosom of her family put a check on his wife's spirits. Sickness in the house—especially the kind of exasperating, unending sickness which is blindness—was a beastly nuisance. In decency she had to devote herself somewhat to poor old Tommy, who was having a bad time getting used to the land of darkness.

But the things done only in common decency seldom profit anyone.

O'Rell, who was anything but a fool, recognized this truth, and once he realized the motive in Phyllis' attentions, he put a stop to them. Perhaps it cost the poor fellow something to tell her "to get along and stop meddling about a broken crock that would much rather be left alone." But he did tell her, and she obeyed him. She renewed her consultations with dressmakers, milliners, and the like, and the sun once more shone upon her world.

Somehow or other Li Quong fell into the habit of dropping in on O'Rell. And in a very little while the two men had become friends. Although they never mentioned the matter, they had in common their feelings for Phyllis. Love for the same woman when there is no rivalry can be a strong bond between men.

More than anyone who had ever known him, Li Quong learned to understand O'Rell. He delved beneath the surface layer of good-nature and shyness and struck upon a vein of extreme sensitiveness in the man. Also he found that he was unhappy for another reason than his loss of sight. He longed for a little affection, a little care, a little understanding to be given him. And because the one person in the world from whom he cared to accept these gifts could not or would not give them, life was hardly worth the bother of living.

Phyllis O'Rell gave London her farewell dinner about ten days before the *Esmeralda* sailed. She made a magnificent affair of it. Everyone—enemies and friends—were bidden; the enemies to expire of envy, the friends to be dazzled by her brilliancy as a hostess.

The walls of the great dining-room in the Park Lane mansion were banked with flowers, the table strewn with them and with a fortune in plate and cut glass. Imitating her pal, Lady Calthrope, who prided herself on her ability always to find novelty for her guests in this oldest of worlds, Phyllis succeeded in finding an Arabian orchestra to play weird, exotic desert airs between courses. She sat at one end of the table resplendent in a gown from Worth and the O'Rell diamonds which she wore only on special occasions.

At the other end of the table sat Tommy O'Rell. The blind man was a pathetic figure amid the gaiety of the two score or more laughing, chattering men and women. Although he managed to uphold his end of the conversations started in his vicinity and although he seemed quite at ease despite his affliction, he was rather out of it.

Li Quong, who sat a few chairs away at his right, felt a great pity for his host grow in his heart. And his eyes, straying down the table, rested on Phyllis in a stare of speculation and perhaps a little wonder that she who lived day after day with Tommy O'Rell should be so blind to his qualities and feelings.

Then like a flash of lightning from behind banked clouds a flash of what seemed positive truth came to him. Were someone or something able to bring this man and woman together, it would be the making of the woman. It seemed to Li Quong that under the influence of O'Rell's gentle, upright nature, could she ever be brought there, Phyllis would lay aside her cloak of selfishness, of indifference, of cold inhumanness and emerge the woman he had once believed her to be—a woman with her soul awake.

And in his heart he prayed that this might happen, prayed with all the intensity of a true believer in the goodness of Buddha, with all the longing of a lover to give the supreme gift to the woman he loves.

The Oriental has the power to lose himself in his thoughts no matter what his surroundings. From before the vision of Li Quong his fellow diners disappeared. Only Phyllis O'Rell and her blind husband were left. As his concentration grew, becoming almost like a live, aggressive thing, his sensitiveness grew with it. In some strange fashion which at the time, however, seemed perfectly natural, he was able to absorb the emotions and thoughts of these two people with whom he was vitally concerned.

First crowding in upon his consciousness were the feelings of O'Rell. They came like the uneasy, mournful notes of the cellos and base viols opening a symphony. They were charged with an unspeakable longing and a wistfulness almost unbearable. They seemed to pass through Li Quong's being and journey to the woman laden with his pleas for their recognition.

And in her they set up a strumming on the strings of bewilderment. It was as though she suddenly began to have feelings such as she had never had before and was concerned, at first, less with the feelings themselves than with wonder that she should have them. Her eyes fastened themselves on Li Quong's in an expression of questioning as though she knew he were in some measure responsible for these feelings and she wanted to ask him why they had been sent to her.

She faltered a little in the expression of her conscious self which was indulging in gay badinage with a young man beside her. Then her eyes travelled down the table until they met the sightless ones of her husband. Li Quong experienced a second of exaltation when he saw her face soften to an unused pity and—was it tenderness?

The second passed. Her gaze was withdrawn and Li Quong was conscious now only of a slow consideration going on in her subconscious mind. Whether it was favourable or not toward her new feelings he could not tell.

The dinner progressed. Li Quong was once more a part of it. He found himself patiently explaining to a stupid dowager that the wearing of queues is not a religious custom of China. He was weighed down with a great melancholy. He felt that a moment had gone by which might have been the greatest moment of his life and that nothing, really nothing, had happened. He was inclined to hate himself as though he had somehow failed to help in the doing of something he had wanted done.

A silence fell over the table. Then out of it he heard Phyllis O'Rell's clear voice speaking.

"Good people," she said, "I'm going to tell you something that will surprise you. I will not be one of you on the *Esmeralda* much as I appreciate Lord Barriscale's kindness in asking me. I'm sorry but—well, you see I think I'd rather go to Devon with Tommy—that is if he wants me. No, no, dear boy. There's no use arguing. I've quite made up my mind and you know how I am when I have done that."

Everyone was standing about in the drawing-room. The impossibly clever Mrs. Cranford edged her way to Li Quong's side.

"I think you had something to do with that, Mr. Li Quong," she said in her thin, querulous tones.

Li Quong bowed to her.

"With what, dear lady?" he asked.

She tapped her fan against his arm impatiently.

"With the only thing of moment that has happened this evening," she answered. "With Phyllis' giving up Barriscale's party and doing the loving wife act to Tommy. Why did you do it?"

Li Quong looked into her pale, green eyes. A smile curved the corners of his lips. Then he said:

"What more can the gods do for their beloved than awaken their souls?"

He moved slowly away, still smiling.

A few weeks later he returned to China. He was quite happy.

THE MATCH

By Lewis Brown

SUDDENLY Gotthard noticed the fire in his pipe had died out. He had not been smoking for a half-hour or more, although in all that time the pipe had not once left his mouth. He reached into his pocket for a match; he struck it. But he did not put it to the pipe. Instead he let the match burn idly. Fascinated, he watched the little flame grow. He gazed at it: a gaseous base of richest blue, a narrow band of brightened gray, a glorious mitre of whitened gold. Then he watched the flame die down. It fell. Then, with all its puny strength, it leapt into the air again. Thrice it leapt frantically; thrice it fell impotently. It hovered low, crestfallen. Then it rallied; but not to regain its glory now—merely to retain its life. Vain. The base and band and mitre all shrank. They merged into one, as if uniting against death. Useless. The tiny flame guttered and sank never to rise again. Only a great golden spark was left in the black and twisted wood. Then even that began to contract and tarnish. It divided in two, each half battling for itself. But again in vain. Each half shrank to the size of a pin-point—and died. Only a black, withered splinter of wood remained.

Gotthard regarded it thoughtfully. Then to it he whispered sadly:

"You—you are like the life of man."

He sat motionless in his chair while mute night breezes came into the room and softly fondled his face. But he did not feel them. His whole being seemed lost in a slough of dismal thoughts as he sat there immobile and silent. Then suddenly, with an effort, he pulled himself together and unthinkingly, almost unconsciously, flicked the burnt match out of the window. He flicked it and it flew out into the vast blue-blackness of the night. It fell and was gone for ever. . . .

Then abruptly Gotthard sat up in his chair and in bewilderment regarded the hand that had thus cast away the match. Wide-eyed he stared at it until at last—he understood.

Slowly he shook his head. His mouth turned down at the corners and his lips curled cynically. And to his hand he whispered bitterly:

"And you—you are like the hand of God."

IT is the tragedy of actresses that, by the time they are mellow, deep, and subtle enough to play the parts of *grandes amoureuses*, they no longer are young enough. . . . It is the tragedy of all women.

FAITH

By Walter McLaren Imrie

I

THE Widow Savard was setting the table for supper. In the dim lamplight of the small low-ceilinged room, she moved about mechanically—a thin, stooped figure in a gray home-spun gown. Her son, Ovide, who had been for three days at Sacré-Cœur, with relatives, was to return to her that night.

A bright fire was burning in the stove, and comfortingly the copper kettle sang its age-old roundelay. From time to time the wind went moaning past the door to die away, eventually, in the far mountains beyond the river; but the Widow Savard gave no heed, and her hands went quietly on with her work.

There were so many things to do, and at any moment, now, Ovide might come!

The Widow crossed to the window, and peered anxiously into the deepening winter twilight. How dark it was—out there in the garden, yet in the sky—so strangely blue with the vague brightness of North Countries—the stars were shining. Beneath their radiance the village road lay colourless and deserted, except that for a moment as she gazed, the door of Pierre Cid's general store opened in the distance, emitting a broad ribbon of yellow light that suddenly unwound its length across the highway, and then, as suddenly, wound itself up again.

For some moments the Widow Savard stood quietly beside the window, searching the increasing darkness with her weary eyes. Finally, however, she turned back to her work with a sigh of disappointment.

What could be keeping him?—she asked herself, and the shadow of anxiety passed over her. Perhaps there had been a storm in the back-country—hark! the wind was crying again! Perhaps it was only that the roads were drifted high, or that his horses were unequal to the night.

Uneasily, she glanced from habit at the old clock in the corner, yet little of consolation could it give, for the mute hands upon its painted dial pointed with lifeless unconcern to the dead noon-hour of a day a long time dead. For fifteen years they had stood thus, as though held motionless by some dread fascination; and always in the Widow's memory there lingered the remembrance of a departed Spring, when her Ovide, a little child, bent on the ways of mischief, had questioned with eager hands the offices of wheel and weight and pendulum. Long she had prayed *le bon Dieu* that some day the clock might run again, but in the village lived no man who could repair the ancient timepiece.

A curious smile lighted the tired face of Madame Savard as she recalled the bygone season which the silent clock bespoke. *Dieu!*—those had been happy days, indeed! How gaily they had lived, and loved—she and her man, Savard; and their little one—their Ovide—what happiness had they not found in him! How proud they both had been when folk had stopped to touch his shining curls, and to admire him, and to call him "Pretty Boy."

Ah—they had spoken truth, those folk, when they had called him that, and he had grown into the splendid youth his childhood had promised; but now, Savard was gone, of course, these many years, and a great weariness was in her heart.

Many had been the griefs of her long widowhood, colourless the years that marked the leaden flight of time. Like tapers, one by one, her simple joys in life had finally gone out, forgotten in the everlasting penury of her existence. Ovide, alone, remained to her. He was the peace of heart that closed each weary day; he was the light that glorified her path. What other comfort had she than her son—what other joy or gladness visited her heart? For eighteen years she had given him each waking thought that she had known; each hope and each ambition centred in his future.

He was to be great, some day—this boy, Ovide; with unreasoning conviction, the Widow knew this for a certainty—and surely the dawn for which she waited could not now be far removed. A premature old-age was creeping stealthily upon her, and the justice of the God in Whom her faith reposed would not permit that she be finally denied the glorious realization of the dream for which her hands had laboured.

Quietly the gray figure moved about in the dim lamp-light; with a rattle, the burning wood settled in the glowing stove. From time to time, the Widow Savard pressed her thin hands to her eyes. Her head was aching piteously. It was the interminable weaving that brought these knife-thrusts to her brain—yet she must weave all winter long so that in summer, when the travellers came, there was gay catalans within the house to sell them. Vaguely, the dim horror of the blindness that might descend upon her unaware was in her heart; yet must she work from morn till night, for poverty, alone, could still defeat her great ambition for Ovide.

Suddenly there came a step on the garden path; a clear, young voice rang out in gay hallooing; then—a moment of silence, and — the door flew open.

The Widow Savard uttered a low cry of joy:

"Oh! — *mon Dieu!*—Ovide—why will you shout like that? You are no longer *boy, mon fils;* do you forget to-day you are a *man?*"

The son's arms were about his mother, and the tears that had started to her eyes were soon forgotten under the fervour of his caresses.

Thus they stood for a moment, the lamp-light casting strange, moving shadows upon them.

"*Ma mère, ma mère*—you have missed me—it has been lonely here for you? Ah!—do not say to me it is not so, for I can see it in your eyes! Not for a day will I leave you again—for I have been lonely—too."

His mother smiled at him through her tears:

"Is it for always, *mon fils,* that you will fear to leave me? It is not well that you should have these thoughts. *Vraiment,* I have missed you, yes; but next year it is to Quebec that you will go, and it is a *long, long* journey, *mon cher.* You must learn to be brave and strong for it, Ovide."

She turned to her work for a moment, and then continued, "Now to-night you are come—just from Sacré-Cœur; three days have you been gone from me, and yet, *mon Dieu!*—you say to me that you have missed me! Do not forget, *mon fils,* that you are to-day—a *man*—no longer *boy,* but eighteen years of age. Learn to be brave, and fear not to go alone into the world. It is your mother's wish that you be strong—remember!"

Madame Savard crossed to a cupboard set high upon the wall and carefully drew forth a small, white jar.

"Now, off with your coat, your cap, Ovide! In the oven there is fresh bread that I have made, and I have here some sweet preserve for you!"

Under the lamp-light, the Widow Savard and her son sat down at table. From habit of long years the mother breathed a swift inaudible blessing, and both crossed themselves devoutly. Then the bread came forth from the oven, a kettle of herring was lifted from the fire, and the little room rang loud with happy laughter and merry talk.

Now it was that the lamp-light fell

for the first time full upon the face of Ovide Savard, as he sat at the table of his mother, unconscious of his natural charm, and unaware of his symbolic beauty.

He was a glorious youth with the proportions of an heroic figure. Behind him, as he stirred in his chair, his shadow moved upon the wall like that of some great, restless, earth-bound Titan. Above his brow a tangle of black curls fell in a wayward disarray, and there was a peculiar quality about his hair in that it seemed to retain within its night-like depths some faint reflection of each and every light it caught, this giving to his head, as he moved to and fro, a vague brightness which held the eye.

His features were large but finely chiselled, his brows black and highly arched, his eyes a deep violet, darkening to gray, almost, at times, and seeming to anticipate with every glance some revelation of life that would delight them. The nose was high and somewhat long, the nostrils sensitive and nervous. The generous mouth was firm and given to laughter and red as the flame that sleeps in smouldering fires. When Ovide smiled, which he did often, one caught the gleam of strong, white teeth, and his gay laughter carried with it some sense of freedom, some sense of animal strength held well in leash, that won the listener's heart.

The dress of this heroic figure was picturesque in the extreme. His sheepskin coat thrown off, he lolled in the simplicity of dark blue flannel blouse and corduroys. About his waist he wore a gaily-coloured sash, woven of linen, and knotted at his side. The free ends of the sash, terminating in long fringe, hung to his knees, and thrust beneath this girdle he carried at his thigh a thong-bound hunting-knife. Heavy gray woollen stockings covered his feet, and before the open door of the stove stood the walrus-hide boots, which he had just removed—knee-length, and spiked at toe and heel with brass.

The Widow Savard was justified in the deep satisfaction with which she viewed the general aspect of her son, as he sat opposite her at table. Surely no other mother in Tadoussac had been so blessed, and, oftentimes, the Widow doubted if there was the equal of her boy in all the world, for strength or manly beauty. Savard, of course, had been handsome, but *ma foi!*—Ovide was all of that and more—so generous, so loving, and—so good.

And he was quick to understand, was this Ovide; both French and English had he learned to read, and the Curé said his spelling was perfection. His writing, perhaps, was not as regular as one might wish, but all that would come in time, and, *Dieu!*—there were those in Tadoussac who could not write at all! In only one expression could all these many virtues find their outlet, and, naturally, that expression was an ultimate renown.

For years Madame Savard had pondered on this great future which *le bon Dieu* had destined for her son, and with each passing day, the joy of his heritage grew in her heart.

Would they not marvel at him—those city folk—when he went up next year to pass his entrance for Laval! What scholarship he would display!—and, ah!—how he would stir the hearts of all the fine young ladies he would be sure to meet! When the fame of his night-black hair and violet eyes came to their ears, they would seek him out—those fine young ladies—and they would listen to his laughter and his river-songs like the enchanted princesses of Fairyland. . . . Then, some day, when *le bon Dieu* was willing, Ovide would make his choice, and, finally—(here the dream always grew dim)—there would be grandchildren. . . . Yes—all of this was written in the stars, and all of those would some day come to pass. . . .

II

It was only a few days later that the Widow of Narcisse Coté met her cousin, the doctor—Pierre Lapointe—

as she was going homewards through the snow, at twilight, from the village.

The two old people paused for a moment by the roadside to converse.

"It is true then, Pierre, that he cannot live? And you have to tell her? *Dieu!* she will go mad—eh?"

Doctor Lapointe nodded his head sorrowfully, and raised his voice very loud, for the Widow Coté was deaf, and overhead the little branches were snapping and cracking in the wind.

"I am afraid it is too late, Marie. If only she had sent for me but one day sooner, perhaps I could have saved him—I do not know; but now he is weak and full of fever, and he is bad, so bad. Perhaps—one cannot tell; he is young, and he has great strength to draw upon."

The Widow of Narcisse Coté passed on through the deepening twilight to her lonely cottage, leaving her cousin to pursue his route alone.

Doctor Lapointe had altered with the passing years, and now his irresolute step marked the arrival of infirm old age. His weary shoulders drooped more and more as each succeeding day was laid upon them. His voice faltered when he spoke, and at the corner his mouth sagged wearily. He had broken down; three score years and ten were upon him, and behind there lay a life of sacrifice, hard work and poor reward.

It was said that he was useless now, by many of the villagers, and some believed that he was no longer rational in thought. Young Jean Leclerc, therefore, had found a practice ready to his hand when he had come to Tadoussac from school, some months ago; but when the son fell ill, Madame Savard thought only of one man to help her—and that man was Pierre Lapointe.

What mattered it to her that idle tongues declared him childish, or that a younger man had cunningly usurped his place? Could he know more of her Ovide than old Lapointe, the very man who, eighteen years ago, had brought her son into the world? It was impossible! What if he did know more of modern science—(was not that the word?)—he did not know her boy, Ovide, and she would have none of him. Doctor Lapointe, alone, and by the grace of God, could save her son!

Just as the winter twilight was settling into darkness the old physician arrived at the cottage of Madame Savard. Thrice he knocked loud upon the door, but no hand unlatched to let him enter. He waited for a moment, then softly turned the knob.

In the inner room Ovide Savard lay senseless in his great, high bed. Backwards and forwards, up and down, his vacant eyes were wandering over the rain-spotted ceiling. One feverish hand lay extended upon the coverlets. Haggard and unkempt, the magnificent head turned restlessly from side to side. At the foot of the bed, her arms thrown out before her over the titan limbs of her son, knelt the Widow Savard. Through the open door of the room, the reflection of the bright fire in the kitchen stove crept quietly in, but the bed was lost in shadow, and a silence, deep and unbroken, brooded over the scene.

The Widow Savard rose to her feet as the doctor entered, and with the dumb, helpless eyes of a trapped animal followed each movement as he examined his patient. From time to time she crossed herself with almost an impersonal and mechanical hand; but her tired eyes lost not the faintest movement at the bedside. She was waiting for old Lapointe to speak, and out of the past, somewhere, there came to her the dim remembrance of a half-forgotten passage from the Scriptures: "Out of the mouths of fools—"

"You must not hope, Madame. Believe me, when I say to you that I will do all for him that man can do; but with such inflammation the very strongest may go quickly."

The doctor paused a moment, and then continued:

"To-night we will reach the height of the fever, and it is to-night that must decide, Madame. He is so very young, and in his body there are such reservoirs of strength; but I will

promise nothing. . . . These plasters must be changed, Madame, and hot bricks should be put about him."

The Widow Savard quickly withdrew from the room, to return some moments later with an armful of bricks, hot from the oven. These she proceeded to cover, one by one, with flannel; meanwhile, the doctor was dissolving in the hollow of a spoon, held high above the flame of a lamp, a small hypodermic tablet. Presently, he drew up into the barrel of the syringe the solution which he had made, but at the sight of the needle the Widow Savard drew back and whispered:

"Ah, *non!—mon Dieu!*"

"*Vraiment,* Madame—he will feel nothing. It is to stimulate the heart. Until he has passed the turn of the night we must give him this, at each three hours. In all the world, this drug alone can give him strength to meet the crisis, when it comes."

With lightning-like rapidity the delicate needle sprang into the firm white flesh of the boy's upper arm, and as quickly was withdrawn again. The figure on the bed remained motionless; only the head stirred gently from side to side, with methodical regularity.

Replacing the hypodermic case in his pocket, Doctor Lapointe took up his hat and stick from the table where they lay.

"Madame Savard, at midnight I will return. If he shows signs of greater pain before that hour, or should the breathing become laboured, you will immediately send for me. Jérôme, the grandson of your neighbour, Jean Baptiste, will bring your message, and I will be at home."

III

Doctor Lapointe stood alone under the desolate winter sky; behind him the Widow Savard had closed the door of her house.

It was quite dark now, and bitterly cold. Above the Saguenay mountains a single star was shining brightly in the blue immensities of heaven. In the neighbouring thicket the little branches were snapping with the frost, but otherwise there was no sound.

On such a night as this, one had to walk fast to keep one's blood from freezing, but that is more easily said than done when one is old and feeble with encroaching years.

With his quickened steps the old physician's thoughts kept pace, and he wondered, vaguely, about the mysteries of Life and Death. Why should man hold to life so desperately? Was it so great a boon—so happy an experience, after all? . . . Ah, surely not; and yet—this boy!—how magnificently he was fighting to hold his own, how sturdily contesting each inch he lost! His very last reserves of strength seemed summoned to the unequal battle!

Why should he cling so obstinately to life—the doctor wondered—when to relax, to acquiesce, would cost so slight an effort in comparison, and bring, besides, the quiet sleep that ends all suffering. What could life hold for him—obscure and penniless? It was a mystery. . . . Of course, his mother's heart would break were he to die, yet was not that the penalty of motherhood? Was Madame Savard, alone, to pass—untouched?

Thus pondering, old Doctor Lapointe had reached the village road. Here the soft mellow light of cottage lamps shone out upon the snow, and in the store of Pierre Cid was laughter and gay talk. Its broken merriment came to him, as though from far away, and for a moment he paused, irresolute, half-minded to go in.

Then, through the glass, he saw the face of young Leclerc, who sat with old Baptiste, beside the stove. Leclerc was speaking, and his strident voice carried in snatches through the door. He was amusing old Baptiste with subtle mimicry of his colleague.

Standing alone upon the steps his colleague heard and understood. He would go on; he could not face the boy.

A mile or more still lay between

himself and home, and here the wind was sharper. His blood was quickened now by the cold mountain air, and strange thoughts, nebulous at first, raced through his mind in undisciplined disorder.

Introspection is the solace of the old. She is the handmaid of all the fading memories that remain when youth has passed, and old Pierre Lapointe to-night was introspective. Fearlessly he looked his life square in the face and knew it—for a failure. *Dieu*, the loneliness, the emptiness that lay behind him! Desolate years, embittering and heartless. For how much longer must his steps go on—he often wondered; and yet, this was a question that no man could answer. The hour must now be somewhere close at hand, for he was old and weary, oh! so weary. Even the effort of memory tired him now, but presently there would be no more remembering, and then—his heart would be at rest. Perhaps when Spring, light-footed, ran once more across the hills—perhaps to-morrow . . .

Doctor Lapointe knew little of the world, for the great world had known but little of himself. The very obscurity of his life had been, perhaps, a great mistake; of this he felt more certain as the shadows of old age lengthened drearily across his path. He had given all his life to these poor villagers, his people, asking nothing from them in a like return. He had worn himself to a shadow for their sakes—grown old in poverty.

Like ghosts from the forgotten past, gray thoughts came to his mind—the ache and pain of half-remembered winter nights, when he had faced the loneliness and storm of desolate country roads, to minister to some suffering woodsman. His hands recalled the touch of reins, falling from frozen fingers—his eyes, the sharp, unutterable pain of blinding snow and knife-edged wind. And *they*—had they once thought of him? Ah, no; seldom enough had they even paid their bills.

Often he had regretted that he had not remained in the great city where he had graduated, instead of returning as he had done to the village of his birth. Surely, where men grew famous overnight, where there was laughter always, he would have found his happiness, his measure of success; but, here, in these wind-swept, desolate mountains, he had lived, and he would die, instead, and none would know, eventually, that he had even passed.

Like a wounded bird out of a lonely sky this one regret came back to him to-night, pathetic and insistent, and beating at his heart with piteous wings; yet it is too late, when twilight has already fallen, to still recall the opalescent skies of dawn. Old age cannot recapture the hopes that youth has known; old age can only wait in patience for the night, but the heart of Pierre Lapointe was weary of patience, and of waiting.

Into his thoughts there came, at this same moment, the fever-stricken figure of Ovide Savard, and pity ran its golden thread through all the fabric of his dreams. It was a terrible thing to realize that all this youth, this splendid strength must perish, and yet to know that *he* might live, perhaps a dozen years.

Why should this be?—he wondered. What Force controlled the destiny of man? Was there a Hand that moved mysteriously behind the stars, and governed all things earthly?

Just at this moment he came to the church. The dazzling sky, ablaze now with the glory of the Northern lights, seemed flung like a banner behind the slender spire, the pale gilt cross. Through the rude stained-glass of the altar windows the flickering light of candles and of swinging lamp fell on the snow-bound churchyard.

It was all very peaceful and serene, and the old man paused a moment by the open gate. Doubtless, some of the villagers were in there now, intent upon their prayers—the Widow of Narcisse Coté, perhaps, and old Tardieu, the smith. He could picture them in devotional attitudes before the dimly-lighted altar—kneeling in the darkness

before the rude Stations of the Cross, or lighting with devout hands the supplicatory candles in whose flame went up their humble prayers to God.

Vaguely, Doctor Lapointe wondered how it would feel after all these years of unbelief to bend the knee once more to a Power, a Force that was not purely physical—that was, in fact, intangible, unseen. He had gone so far beyond the simplicity of orthodox belief; religion had passed so utterly from his small scheme of things. With foes whom he could touch and sense—the visible manifestations of disease, and poverty, and distress—his battles had all been fought. The material world had filled his life so completely that there had remained no room, no time for the development of the spiritual need which originally was surely in him, as it is in all mankind. He did not even know that he felt, now, anything of desire to go back to the old days of unquestioning belief; his life had been lived as he had lived it, and he would walk the road which he had chosen—to the end.

It was many years since he had given thought to God; somehow, he had not needed Him, it seemed. Grief and trouble, and the trouble and grief of others, had been his daily portion; yet he had fought alone, relying not upon the pity or the strength of Unseen Agencies to help him, but on himself—his hand's skill, the swiftness of his knife, the power of herb, and plant, and drug. How little place there had seemed in all of this for a God so mythical, so incomprehensible to the simple mind of man—a Deity Who held the lightning and the rain within His Hand, and smote the guilty and the innocent alike!

. . . And yet, within the four walls of the sanctuary before him, only the mystical prevailed—that which was removed from earth, which knew no human need, no human suffering. Over the worshippers who might be there, the Unseen Presence, to Whose existence he could not quite subscribe, must brood, sentient and awful—the Dreadful Breath hanging like gray sea-mist in the still air above their heads. Yet, there was peace within those walls, and even upon the snow-bound churchyard that peace lay hallowed and unbroken.

The old man soon felt the soft, insidious influence of his religious surroundings creeping upon him. He smiled, sadly. It was incongruous that he, of all men, should now be standing here, almost like a penitent at the altar of the God Whom he had so long, so stubbornly rejected. How M'sieu le Curé would laugh, were he to see him! He would consider it a triumph for the Church, in his ignorance, poor fool, and even say, perhaps, that *his* prayers had been answered!

For a moment, Pierre Lapointe regretted, almost, that he had ever laughed at Sacraments, and prayers, and fastings. Like a worn garment, his self-sufficiency fell from him—and he needed—*God.* Within him there spoke a voice that said:

"Go in, Pierre Lapointe. *Le bon Dieu* grows weary with His waiting, and bids you enter. Cast from your heart this false delusion of your power to heal Ovide Savard; only the Great Physician can work Miracles, Pierre Lapointe. Go in; He waits for you."

The old practitioner unlatched the low door of the church. Perhaps, after all, he had been but the Instrument, the Earthly Vessel of some greater, higher Power. He would go in, and see with his own eyes . . .

The night wind caught the door behind him, and slammed it shut on its hinges. Dull, metallic echoes awoke in hidden places, and ran, whispering, along the walls.

Pierre Lapointe glanced apprehensively about him, and quietly crossed the dimly-lighted entry-way. His hand, remembering the habit of earlier days, instinctively sought and found the Holy Water font upon the wall. Hastily crossing himself, he opened a second door, and before him, utterly deserted and sunk in a calm, religious twilight, lay—the church.

A few expiring candles flickered before the altar, and hanging in the empty darkness, like a spot of living fire, the Perpetual Lamp burned clearly, with a steady flame. The dead air was acrid with the perfume of incense and of drying pine-boughs, and the old man felt a sudden tightening at his throat. He loosened the muffler which was wound about him, and walked unsteadily to the low altar-rail. The weary Madonna in the gilt frame looked out with apathetic eyes from behind the artificial flowers which surrounded her, and, as she looked, her air of deep repose seemed to grow deeper.

Old Lapointe was on his knees, at last!

IV

When she had closed the door of her cottage upon the retreating figure of the doctor, the Widow Savard returned to her vigil by the bedside of her son. A sense of oppression weighed upon her, and her limbs seemed lifeless under the frail weight of her body. She sank to her knees and drew into her own the white hand of Ovide, which lay upon the coverlet.

Who knows the anguish of the mother-heart that has been bidden *not* to hope—the blind, unreasoning despair that comes when hope is finally abandoned? A sudden numbness creeps upon the intellect, the faculties refuse to function; where there was a light a moment past an utter darkness deepens, nor can the martyred heart find comfort anywhere.

So it had come to pass—this bitterness—this desolation—this blow that fell without warning, like a thunderbolt from Heaven, upon a god not yet arrived at his godhood! Where, now, were the dreams that the Widow Savard had cherished all these years—the hopes, the aspirations? Where was justice—where was God, that He permitted this thing to come to pass? Was motherhood but a sham, a horrible delusion, after all—a Cross for womankind to bear, without reward? Was there no pity—anywhere—no sense of righteousness, or of compassion?

The Widow Savard crushed the wasted hand of her son to her lips, and a low cry broke from her. She had been outraged, cheated, tricked! *By whom?*

Her eyes, dim with tears, lifted themselves slowly until their gaze fell upon the crucifix set on the wall above the bed. There, the weary Christ hung dejectedly from His Cross, His head fallen to one side with the extremity of His pain. Upon the wounded brow the crown of thorns lay heavily, piercing the drawn, white flesh, and jewelled with drops of precious blood.

Slow anger, and slower hatred, dawned in the eyes of this mother kneeling by the great, high, shadowy bed. This lifeless image, then, was the symbol of the God in Whom she had so reverently believed—that selfsame God, Who had rewarded her with outrage, cheat, and trickery! There was no answer God could make to her; there was no defence that He could plead! Had she not gone to Him with all her griefs and disappointments, trusted Him blindly, obeyed the Commandments of His Church? Had she not breathed to Him, in the dim hours of twilight and of dawn, the story of the love she bore her son—her hopes for him, and her ambitions?

He had not said to her "Nay." He had only encouraged her by His silence. He had sustained her in her pride. He had accepted her prayers and her offerings—yes—until the very hour, almost, when all that she had lived for was to come to pass—until the very hour when her Ovide was to go forth into the world, his strength and his beauty girt about him—to conquer! There was no excuse that God could make to her! She turned her face away from Him:—she spat upon her Faith!

Stumbling to her feet, her mouth set hard in anger, she reached far over the bed and lifted the offending crucifix from the wall. She would break these false idols that she had worshipped; she would cast them from her house!

Crushed between the palms of her agonized hands the plaster Christ crumbled to dust. The frail cross, freed of its martyred burden, broke in twain.

Thus passed the lowly Nazarene. . . .

By midnight the illness of Ovide Savard had reached its crisis. Lost in a delirium as deep as it was terrible, the son of the Widow Savard lay breathless at the turning-point of Life and Death. Before him stretched the dim, gray borderlands of sleep—unknown, mysterious, and yet alive and sentient with the presence of dread, awful things.

This was the secret place where God, upon the lips of Life, set the imperishable seal of Death—the kiss of change and horrible decay. No light was there, nor living thing of any sort; only the desolation that no man may speak—the utter emptiness of Space.

In this dim, shadowy place the torn soul of Ovide Savard was wandering, seeking the light where there was none to find, crying for peace where peace did not exist.

Dry-eyed beneath a grief too terrible for tears, Madame Savard stood motionless beside the sick-bed of her son, awaiting the return of young Baptiste, who had been sent an hour gone by to bring the doctor.

Her faith in God was gone. She could not say she felt regret, and yet—she missed her Faith. There was no Heart on which her own could break, now that the consolation of her Church was gone from her; there was no Ear that would incline to hear her prayer. She would have reached for Unseen Hands to lift her up, but she could no longer feel the faith that once had taught her They were there. All that remained to her was old Pierre Lapointe. She had lost God—wilfully, and without regret.

Bitter tears came to her eyes, and one thin hand clutched desperately upon her gown, where it lay folded above her wildly beating heart. The ache, the longing for her old, inborn devoutness grew in her, and for a moment she stood almost upon the threshold of repentance, but no!—she had been tricked and cheated, and she *would not* believe! Lapointe alone could save her son; his was the skill, not God's, that would bring back her boy from his far wanderings. About this man, this second Saviour, she would throw a cloak of adoration and of worship. He, alone, could work the Miracle that would bring peace back to her anguished heart; he, alone, was worthy of her Faith.

There came the sound of hurrying footsteps on the snow, and, crying on its hinges, the low door of the kitchen opened.

Old Lapointe came in.

Behind him pressed the boy, Jérôme—curious about Death, and come to watch the last act of the play.

The doctor crossed to the corner of the room where the great bed reared its bulk against the monotonous gray walls. Madame Savard, motionless beside the door, followed each movement of the old physician with eyes that spoke the utter fascination born of a dumb despair.

Lifting the nerveless hand of his patient from the coverlet, Doctor Lapointe held it between his own for a moment—then laid it gently back, and turned:

"Jérôme, you may go home—I tell you! . . . Quick!—and close the door!"

Chagrined and disappointed the wide-eyed boy withdrew. He had been so close to Death, yet it had not been vouchsafed him to see.

Left alone with old Lapointe, Madame Savard stood grimly facing him across the room.

She pressed her head against the wall behind her, and braced herself as though expecting to receive a blow.

"Madame Savard, I would that I could promise you some ray of hope—not for your sake alone, dear friend, but for my own as well; for he has grown dear to me also—your boy, Ovide. Only *le bon Dieu* knows the loneliness that has been in my heart for all these years—the heart of an old

man, who longed for fatherhood, yet knew it not; but being without hope myself, what can I give to you?"

The doctor's hand relaxed, impotently.

"Nothing, dear friend, I am afraid; and just so much you must expect—no more—for he is bad, your son—so bad! *Vraiment*, I cannot tell you what the night will bring, but if he lives, it will be—miracle. Death seems already to be gathering him into her arms, but if *le bon Dieu* wills it not—the power to save him will be sent. Myself—I am but Empty Vessel, as it were—one might say—Instrument, for Other Hands to use."

The Widow's eyes looked straight ahead. She heard each word that Lapointe was saying, but offered no reply. A sense of jargon of empty and discordant sound—if she could but escape from it—*mon Dieu*—what happiness!

"I would ask you now to leave me here alone with him, Madame"—the doctor was continuing; "your presence, it can do no good, and you will only suffer—watching him."

The Widow heard—at last—and moved away, mechanically. Her limbs were hardly able to support her frail, thin body, and at the door her strength seemed suddenly to fail.

"I beg you, now, to go, Madame! *Le bon Dieu* is watching over him."

As from gray ashes sudden fire may leap, so from the numbed, despairing lips of old Madame Savard the blasphemy poured forth:

"*Vierge!*—is it not enough that He should do this thing, but that you, also, should be sent to torture me? I spit upon this God Whom you are suddenly defending! What has come over you, Lapointe, that *you* should turn to *Him*—for aid? Is it the weakness in the head that all the village talks about—or is it that I, too, have gone—*clean mad?*"

A hideous laugh distorted her worn face, and she clutched hard at the bosom of her gown:

"*This* is the payment that your *bon Dieu* has made me—eh?—to rob a widow, who placed her Faith in Him, of the one comfort that she had. Did I not bring him up—my boy, Ovide—to be all things the priest desired—regular in his attendance at the Mass, truthful, devout, obedient? Did I not *pay* for prayers for him—I ask you? It is a mockery to tell me now, Lapointe, that *le bon Dieu* is watching over him! *He* is not there to watch, I say. He is a *cheat!* I would not give you—*that*—for your *bon Dieu!*"

And snapping her fingers before the face of old Lapointe, the half-demented woman stumbled from the room.

Left alone, the doctor stood for some moments, motionless, beside the bed. Under the lamp-light the drawn face of Ovide Savard looked up.

"He will die," said old Lapointe, and turned away.

Through the closed door the retreating footsteps of Madame Savard grew fainter; then there was silence, and with each moment, as it passed, the silence deepened. It beat against the brain of the old man, pounded insistently upon his consciousness with cruel hammers. It seemed to him as though his mind would suddenly collapse, did not some change take place.

Uneasily he crossed to the low window. Faded chintz curtains barred the night, but he drew them wide apart with trembling hands and stood for a moment, spellbound, in the pool of light that entered.

Underneath the snow a phantom Tadoussac lay sleeping. The old moon, low in the West, hung like a silhouette upon the threshold of the day. From cottage chimneys faint spires of smoke arose, finally to creep like guilty ghosts against the brightening sky. It was a pastoral of Winter and of Sleep—as silent as the world it covered.

"I shall be glad when the day comes," said old Lapointe, and he sighed, wearily.

Just when the night was at its ebb, the flickering lamp beside the bed spluttered for a moment, and then—went out.

Lapointe turned suddenly.

Was there some Presence that stood over him, or was he mad indeed, as old Madame Savard had said? He felt in the empty darkness with his hands, but there was nothing there. "It is Death who has come, at last," he thought, "but for which one of us?"

Blindly he stumbled to the bed. The white hand of Ovide still lay extended upon the coverlet but, when he touched it, old Lapointe drew back, for the warm fingers had closed timidly about his own.

"This is not *Death*," said old Lapointe, "but *Life!*"—and suddenly his strength deserted him.

He fell upon his knees beside the bed. In his old heart the flood-gates of his joy were opened, for, to *him*—a sinner—*le bon Dieu* had sent—a *Miracle.*

One tired hand dropped slowly to the floor. It fell upon a crucifix that lay—forgotten—in the dust.

The kneeling figure beside the bed seemed suddenly instinct with life. A trembling hand shot upwards in the dark:

"Father,"—the voice was scarcely audible—"forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

V

Across the northern sky the cold dawn wrote with pallid hand the advent of another day. The night wind sank, and in the first, hushed hour of morning, the little world of Tadoussac lay reverent and still.

The fingers of the dawn crept in between the curtains of the kitchen window, and Madame Savard stirred in her chair beside the stove. Her limbs were cold, and the increasing light seemed suddenly to hurt her eyes. She drew her shawl about her, and got up.

She would go in, now, for if Ovide was dead her presence there could do no harm; and if he lived, he needed her.

"Lapointe! Lapointe!" the Widow whispered, and leaned against the door; "Lapointe!—why is it that you do not answer me? Tell me—he lives, or—is he *dead?*"

There was no answer; and then she saw the kneeling figure by the bed.

"The old man sleeps," she thought—and crossed the room.

"I have come in, Lapointe," she whispered, and laid her hand upon him; but, suddenly, she drew back—aghast!

The man that she had touched was sleeping a much deeper sleep than she had thought, and, as she gazed upon him with a dim horror in her eyes, his hand relaxed the fingers, and from their grasp there fell, directly at the Widow's feet, the broken fragments of the desecrated cross.

She screamed aloud, and staggered back against the wall, one arm thrown out before her, as though to shield her eyes.

"*This* is the Judgment of *le bon Dieu* upon me," she cried—"and my Ovide—is dead!"

But, suddenly, where the old crucifix had hung above the bed, a Cross of light appeared. Downward it lengthened, until its radiant beam caught the still face that lay upon the pillow—downward, until its light fell like a benediction on the bowed head of old Lapointe.

The morning sun was rising, and the drawn curtains at the window had strangely wrought this miracle upon the wall; but Madame Savard, falling upon her knees beside her son, drew him into her arms, and said:

"By this same Cross which *le bon Dieu* has sent, have you been saved, Ovide!"

VI

The spring had come to Tadoussac, and worked her gentle way with earth and sky and sea. The agonized, wind-bitten trees had felt her swift, sure hands in passing; her eager feet had lightly run their course athwart the desolate, brown hills.

The May sky caught the deep blue shadows of the river, and flung a glorious canopy across the morning; like galleons upon a Spanish Main the

white clouds drifted idly to the sea, their canvas spread before the wind.

Springtime was everywhere—tender and pensive. It breathed across the low sweep of the mountains, where they clasped the Saguenay; its magic web was hung in gay abandonment before the eyes of the beholder, spangled with dew, and weighted with the loveliness of flowers.

Above the lilacs in the simple garden of Madame Savard, a lonely bee was circling in the soft, warm air. His golden body turned with drowsy indolence, a flaming jewel set upon a field of blue. From under him the perfume of the white and purple flowers arose—heavy and sweet—and in its depth he dreamed away the sunlit moments.

Through the branches of the maple-trees the morning light fell in pale traceries of silver upon the garden, and, somewhere in the sky, a lark poured forth his soul in cadences of song, forgetful of the earth, and of all earthly things.

Where the old garden fell abruptly to the sea, the hum of honey-laden bees arose, monotonous, insistent; and here Madame Savard was standing, beside her son, Ovide. Her eyes were lost to seaward, and in her arms she held the rich spoils of her garden-side—great, heavy flowers of purple and of white that spoke of Immortality and Death.

"And all the dreams that we have dreamed, *ma mère*, they will come true? And I will go on, as you have said, and build for *him*—where *he* left off?"

"Ah, *oui!*—all will be well, *mon fils*, for it is written in the stars. You will be great—some day—and from that High Place where *he* is, *our friend* will now look down—and understand."

Above the silver ribbon that marked the shining sands the sea-gulls were circling. Deep in her reverie the Widow watched their broken flight.

"Madame Savard!" a voice called from the gate and, turning at the sound, the Widow saw a stranger standing there.

"*Bon jour*, my friend; what can I do for you?"

"Ah, that I cannot say, Madame; perhaps it is that I can do for you, instead! They tell me in the village that in your house there stands a clock which has not run for many years. By trade, I am a maker of fine clocks, Madame, and no wheel is too small, no spring too intricate for these two hands of mine. Now, if what they have told me be the truth, perhaps it is, as I have said, that I can be of some slight service here to you."

"*C'est très étrange, n'est-ce pas, ma mère!—This* is another prayer that *le bon Dieu* has answered!"—and Ovide pressed his mother's hand.

Madame Savard smiled wistfully.

"Ah, *non*, it is not strange that he should come, *mon fils;* now that I have found my Faith again, I know that *le bon Dieu* has always heard my prayers. . . . Take you my flowers, Ovide; they are for the grave of old Lapointe," and turning to the maker of fine clocks, she said:

"Come, now, my friend, with me! This clock, you see—it has not run for many years. It has been sick—oh! such a long, long time. Perhaps your hands can make it well again!"

ENGAGED

By Laura Kent Mason

LAURA closed the front door softly and climbed upstairs to her room in a sort of ecstasy, her fingers doubled up, held against her throat, as if she were afraid of losing something precious she held in them. She stepped gently on the stairs—the rest of the family was asleep—and even the creaking of the boards seemed a smooth, regular harmony. She closed the door of her room and sat down on a little low chair near the window.

So—Allan had proposed to her . . . at least he thought he had done the proposing . . . well, he had, after all . . . really. Allan and she were engaged . . . going to be married. Allan had asked her to marry him . . . had told her he loved her . . . best of all, really loved her. She and Allan . . .

Why not? Wasn't she desirable, quite worth marrying? Wasn't she the prettiest girl in the crowd, the gayest—the, yes, the cleverest? Getting Allan proved that. It was a suitable match. Quite. Her father and Allan's father had been friends for years and years . . . even their mothers. Outside of a slight, usual flutter they wouldn't even be surprised. No one would be . . . no one, that is, who mattered, now. After all, she and Allan had been "going together" for months now, six months, anyhow . . . and they'd been good friends before that—always before that. It was quite all right—most fortunate.

They could marry soon, now, in a month or two, no use waiting. They could take one of the new little bungalows over in Forbes Park, near the Harlands—it was pretty out there. And, married, she could relax a bit, settle down as one of the Married Set, but have good times. Married to Allan . . .

Allan was a dear . . . the nicest man she had ever known. She saw him, now, as he had looked when he—proposed, an hour before. They had been sitting on the verandah and the electric light from the corner had filtered through the wistaria vines. How handsome Allan was, his lean face, his smooth light hair, his hands. And he really thought he loved her . . . did love her.

She could still feel his lips on her mouth, her cheek. He was a dear . . . Allan . . .

Why shouldn't she marry him . . . have taken him, if she could get him? She *could* get him, she had proved that. Why not? Wouldn't it be silly—unthinkable, wanting him—and letting him go? Things like that . . .

There was Amy, of course. She had been thinking of Amy all evening . . . and days, evenings before this evening. Amy. Why bother about Amy now? Allan was hers, Laura's. Let Amy find someone else, if she couldn't hold Allan.

Of course it had been fair . . . how silly to worry about it, even think of it. Of course Amy and Allan had gone together, but lots of boys have love-affairs before they settle down . . . she wouldn't have wanted Allan if other girls hadn't cared for him, showed that he was desirable.

Amy was a little fool if she had even thought she could get Allan. She'd

see that, now. Why, Amy was nobody at all, no people, nothing, a pale little thing, with big eyes and a colourless face and plain hair—the idea, the way she strained her hair back, just parting it and doing it into a knot behind. Even Allan noticed how unbecomingly she wore it, when it was pointed out to him. Oh, it was easy enough to see how Allan had been taken in, in the first place . . . that little thing was cleverer than she looked, for all of her colourlessness.

It had been Amy's fault, of course. Girls like that lead fellows on . . . goodness knows how far it had gone. And Amy read poetry to Allan—slim, white volumes . . . things like that. Well, she, too, could read poetry to Allan—if he hadn't grown up, got more sensible. Allan had taken Amy to places, theatres, the park. Laura had seen them together, Allan bending over her, Amy smiling up into his face . . . such a little thing for such a tall man—and always dressed in dark, cheap colours . . . rather dowdy.

You mustn't "knock" girls like that . . . that's too evident, men don't like it. It's just contrast, gradual contrast, working ever and ever so slowly, that accomplishes results. Allan saw things, in the end. She was really doing the best thing for Allan, wasn't she? If she had let him go on, he might have married Amy—or worse. Imagine marrying that little, mouse-like thing . . . it would have meant stepping out of everything for Allan. Now . . .

Perhaps Allan had loved Amy. She didn't ask for first love. All she asked for was Allan . . . she had him . . . was going to marry him.

It wasn't fair to Amy . . . Amy and she had been friends, in a way. Well, why wasn't it? Amy was as bright as she was. Amy could fight back, if she wanted to. Maybe Amy had tried to fight back, tried to hold Allan—and lost. It hadn't been easy to win. Laura knew that. She had worked, worked, all winter. Still, the crowd, parties, coquetries, clothes, family, things like that had helped, in a small town. Amy hadn't had those. Amy hadn't had anything, except big eyes and a pale little face. Still . . . Amy read poetry and talked awful rot about things no one else cared about . . . a pretended depth . . . it was just as well.

Laura got up, started to unfasten her frock, remembered that she had promised Allan she would write him a note—that very night—now. Silly—still she might as well, there was a post-box on the corner, where the light was. She could skip out there in a minute.

At her desk she wrote a note carefully, five lines in her angular, artificial writing, read it over, sealed it. She was glad, now, that Allan had asked her to write to him, right away. It would settle things, decidedly. She'd tell the family, too, in the morning—get it definitely arranged. That was the trouble with Amy . . . why Amy had had Allan once, if she'd only known it, known how to play her cards . . . but she'd kept him to herself, in the background . . . men like Allan have to be pushed into things, gently, hedged around with publicity, made a part of a scheme. With the engagement announced and parties started for them, she and Allan would be as good as married. She'd ring up Grace, first thing in the morning, and let Grace give a luncheon to announce the engagement—they could have little pink corsages with the names in them for souvenirs—or something new. Grace was good at parties . . .

She crept down the stairs, they seemed just normally creaky now, with no thrill in them, and ran outside. It was only a step to the corner. She hurried to the post-box, dropped in the letter, ran back to the porch, stopped there a minute. A wind had come up, cold, biting. The wistaria stirred uneasily. In the living-room a window had been left open and the curtains flapped monotonously. Here, half an hour ago, Allan had kissed her . . . told her he loved her . . . it had thrilled her . . . she was going to marry Allan . . .

The thrill was gone, now. A soggy, chill, unpleasant heaviness had taken its place. Allan . . . going to marry Allan . . . Allan, of course . . . There was no one else.

Yet, at that moment, Laura knew that she wished that there was someone else, someone else who would have loved her, proposed to her, without plans and scheming, someone she loved, who would have loved her first of all. Allan had loved Amy without any planning or schemes . . . had fallen in love with Amy—kissed Amy . . .

Allan wouldn't have looked at her, noticed her, if she hadn't planned. Now, she was going to marry Allan—and she would have to keep on—planning . . .

Yet, Allan was the nicest man she knew, might ever know, good-looking, fine—and she loved him, too, loved him more than she loved anyone else. He loved her, now. He had said so. She had to work for him—work to get him. That was true. But she had got him. Don't most women have to work and plan and scheme to get the men they marry? Laura thought they did, though she knew that she would never admit it again, would never definitely find out.

A love match . . . theirs was a love match, of course. The town papers would call it that, all of her friends would call it that. A love match . . . well, didn't they love each other? . . .

The wind seemed colder. Laura shivered, went inside, closed the front door carefully again, tried the latch, went up the unpleasantly creaking stairs and into her room. She closed the door and started to undo her frock at the throat.

Why . . . she was engaged to Allan . . . Allan had proposed to her . . . had asked her to marry him . . . a love match . . . they would both be very happy! . . .

Suddenly, quite unexpectedly, she found her eyes full of tears . . . she was sobbing. She threw herself on the bed. It was not Allan's face she saw, now, in her mind, but another face, little, large-eyed, pale.

"Amy," she sobbed, "Amy, Amy!"

THE only time a woman doesn't trust her intuition is when it tells her that the man she has marked out for herself is too shrewd to be snared.

SUCCESS consists in saying what is popular, thinking what is profitable, and doing what is expedient.

MARRIAGE is like a besieged town: those outside want to get in and those inside want to get out.

MOODS

By Grace Hazard Conkling

IF my moods were fagots dry
And my will were one live spark,
Fire should touch the tallest sky;
You'd forget the colour of dark.

I am tired of dreaming things
That go by like morning dew.
Nothing that I make has wings
Strong enough to get to you.

Spiders spin a cobweb wheel
Made of tinsel like the sun.
When I break it do they feel
Life for them is over and done?

I am tired of nets that shine
As the spider's hung with dew:
Come, my dear, and shatter mine!
Take my dreams away with you!

BEAUTY

"—doubtless the greatest value of a woman is her beauty."—*Cibber*, 1671-1757.

"VALAZE"

Beauty Preparations

Exclusive products of the WORLD'S PREMIER COMPLEXION SPECIALISTE

Madame Helena Rubinstein

will impart a fresh alluring beauty to your skin—will relieve your face of all signs of strain, ill-health, or fatigue. Perhaps one of those mentioned in the adjoining column will interest you; if not, many others are described fully in INSTRUCTIVE BROCHURE, which will be sent on application.

VALAZE WHITENER.—Invaluable for whitening the hands, arms, and throat. *It will not rub off.* Quite unique. Price **3/6.**

VALAZE SNOW LOTION.—A liquid powder which invests the face with an exquisite softness of colour—white, pink, or cream. Price **4/6.**

VALAZE CRUSHED ROSE LEAVES.—A delightful new colouring for the face. It reproduces natural tints to perfection. Price **3/-** and **6/-.**

VALAZE BLACKHEAD & OPEN PORE PASTE.—Used when washing in place of soap. Clears, cleanses, and refines the skin. Price **2/9.**

VALAZE BLEACHING CREAM. — A remarkably quick remover of sunburn, tan, and fur marks. Price **4/6**

Exclusive Treatments given daily at the Valaze Salons. There is a Valaze remedy for every defect of complexion and contour. SPECIAL LESSON TREATMENTS, **10/6.**

24 Grafton St., Bond St., London, W.1

The Completing Touch

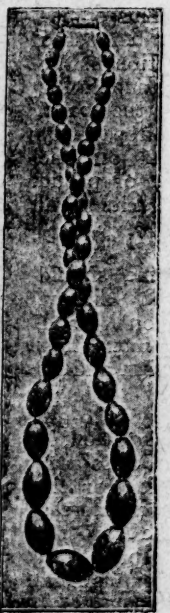
My lady's toilette is never complete until Pomeroy Day Cream—the vanishing cream de luxe—has added its quota to the charm of her complexion.

Pomeroy Day Cream

In dainty half-crown vases at high-class Chemists, Perfumers, etc.

Mrs. POMEROY Ltd., 29 Old Bond St., W.1 and 185 High St., Kensington

(*Use also Pomeroy Tooth Paste*, 1s. 3d. *a tube.*)



GOOD'S
"Cameo Corner"
FOR
CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

Real Antique Amber, Old Georgian Boxes. Specimen pieces of Old Ivories. Rare Antique Intaglios and Old Georgian Silver.

Many perfect examples of 17th and 18th Century Jewellery.

Charming pieces of Real Historic Interest at moderate prices.

Selections sent on approval to all parts of the country.

Full market value given for Diamonds, Pearls, and precious stones of every description.

GOOD'S
"Cameo Corner"
1, NEW OXFORD ST.,
LONDON, W.C. 1

Telephone: Museum, 4296

Telegrams: "Goocamecor, Westcent, London."

As Charming as the Flowers
Its soft, velvety lather; its delicate fragrance and essential purity, commend themselves to all users of
PRICE'S
Court Bouquet
COMPLEXION SOAP
23 charming and distinctive varieties.
(Miniature tablet 2d. post free.)
Made by PRICE'S, BATTERSEA, LONDON, S.W. 11.
PRICE'S COURT BOUQUET COMPLEXION SOAP

When answering these Advertisements please mention the Smart Set

ABOUT FASHIONS AND OTHER THINGS

By Mary Pitcairn

In the days of the full-flavoured melodrama and the two to three volume novel the fascinating adventuress invariably wore a sequined gown that revealed to perfection her sinuous figure. To-day, if all those who wore sequined gowns were adventuresses, one might look in vain for heroines, and—it is to be feared—have to search as diligently for the traditional serpentine figure! Nothing is harder to wear than the frock which is all paillettes; its very weight insists on its taking certain straight lines, and one has to be "just right" in build to really look well in this type of dress. Nevertheless, the number of those who attempt the impossible is countless, and it may be for this reason that the newest models are so firmly inclined to tulle draperies of some sort by way of ally. The simplest form of diversion on these lines consists of the two-panel frock with tiers of tulle flounces at either side. A more novel treatment, however, was exploited by a wonderful gold affair of the sheath description clouded by nut-brown tulle festooned from the hip-line—this arrangement, too, masking the tendency these spangled dresses have to stretch when one sits down.

Amongst the novelties in the paillettted materials there are quite a number reminiscent of very elaborate brocades, and consequently many-hued in colour. One of the prettiest, however, as well as one of the simplest, was just a straight little frock of iridescent blues and silver, the shoulder-straps of large single poppies or giant anemones that shaded from pink to glowing crimson, which colours were echoed in a huge butterfly bow sash of tulle.

After so many dashingly sparkling frocks it is a real rest, as well as pleasure, to encounter such a model as that worn by pretty Marjorie Gordon in that diverting play "Will you Kiss Me?" Here the underdress is a striped gold tissue that gleams effectively through the four-pointed draperies of the daffodil yellow chiffons that "half reveal and half conceal," in a tantalizing manner, even to those sitting in the stalls. Another frock of which one would have liked a closer view is Miss Gordon's second-act dress of Wedgwood blue chiffon, made in two long panels that separate to show the underdress of jade green and gold shot tissue, the colours of which are repeated in the brocaded sash. Earlier in the play there is a pink frock on the latest lines for one-piece models, inasmuch as it has all the effect of a coat, gathered on to a wide belt of itself and opening over an underskirt of the same material adorned with soutache embroideries.

Now that furs are cheaper they have gained quite a new importance, and are likely to retain it very late into the season—unless we are treated to something unusually beneficent in the matter of spring weather! The most beautiful wrap I have seen was also a decided novelty. For one thing, it could be worn in no less than three completely different ways, each of which showed its graces to the full. It was carried out in tailless ermine, with twin bands of chinchilla guarding the throat, and a fringe of wee black and white tails adown the sides, while the lining was a wonderful Rose-du-Barri, embroidered in whirls of gold thread. This sumptuous garment could either be tossed on shawl-wise, or find variation in the form of a burnous when the supple fur fell into a deep hood at the back. Finally, slung round with apparently careless grace and fastened on one shoulder, it attained an air of proud bravado quite in keeping with its regal magnificence.

Aspirants to Cinema fame should apply to the Ralph Lynn Cinema Academy, of 15, Pavilion Road, Knightsbridge, for their interesting brochure dealing with the film and its future possibilities.

The object of the Academy is to get into touch with people of education, in the hope that amongst this class may be found the talent requisite for the making of Cinema stars. It is interesting to note that although the Academy has only been open since April, 1920, yet over 60 per cent. of its pupils have actually appeared on the screen. This is due, without doubt, to the very efficient training of the instructors, all of whom are well-known actors, and, it may be added, demobilized officers.

Some Old-Fashioned Beauty Recipes

Simple and Effective

BY

MIMOSA

The Magnetism of Beautiful Hair

BEAUTIFUL hair adds immensely to the personal magnetism of both men and women. Actresses and smart women are ever on the lookout for any harmless thing that will increase the natural beauty of their hair. The latest method is to use pure stallax as a shampoo on account of the peculiarly glossy, fluffy, and wavy effect which it leaves. As stallax has never been used much for this purpose it comes to the chemist only in ¼-lb. sealed original packages, enough for twenty-five or thirty shampoos. A teaspoonful of the fragrant stallax granules, dissolved in a cup of hot water, is more than sufficient for each shampoo. It is very beneficial and stimulating to the hair, apart from its beautifying effect.

Permanently Removing Superfluous Hair

HOW to permanently, not merely temporarily, remove a downy growth of disfiguring superfluous hair, is what many women wish to know. It is a pity that it is not more generally known that pure powdered pheminol, obtainable from the chemist's, may be used for this purpose. It is applied directly to the objectionable hair. The recommended treatment not only instantly removes the hair, leaving no trace, but is designed also to kill the roots completely.

Don't Have Grey Hair

GREY hair is often a serious handicap to both men and women while still in the prime of life. Hair dyes are not advisable because they are always obvious, inconvenient, and often downright injurious. Few people know that a very simple formula, which is easily made up at home, will turn the hair back to a natural colour in a perfectly harmless manner. You have only to get two ounces of tammalite concentrate from your chemist and mix it with three ounces of bay rum to prove this. Apply this simple and harmless lotion for a few nights to the hair with a small sponge and the greyness will gradually disappear. The lotion is neither sticky nor greasy, and has been proved over and over again for generations past by those in possession of the formula.

To Have Smooth, White Skin, Free From Blemish

DOES your skin chap or roughen easily, or become unduly red or blotchy? Let me tell you a quick and easy way to overcome the trouble and keep your complexion beautifully white, smooth, and soft. Just get some ordinary mercolized wax at the chemist's and use a little before retiring as you would use cold cream. The wax, through some peculiar action, flecks off the rough, discoloured, or blemished skin. The worn-out cuticle comes off just like dandruff on a diseased scalp, only in almost invisible particles. Mercolized wax simply hastens Nature's work, which is the rational and proper way to attain a perfect complexion, so much sought after, but very seldom seen. The process is perfectly simple and quite harmless.

Blackheads Fly Away

A PRACTICALLY instantaneous remedy for blackheads, greasy skins, and enlarged pores, recently discovered, is now coming into general use in the boudoir. It is very simple, harmless, and pleasant. Drop a stymol tablet, obtained at the chemist's, in a tumbler full of hot water. After the effervescence has subsided bathe the face in the liquid, using a small sponge or soft cloth. In a few minutes dry the face, and the offensive blackheads will come right off on the towel. Also the large oily pores immediately close up and efface themselves naturally. The greasiness disappears, and the skin is left smooth, soft, and cool. This simple treatment is then repeated a few times at intervals of four or five days to ensure the permanence of the result.

MRS. BEETON BEATEN

With more wit than was apparent it was once said, "There are people dying now who never died before;" and in somewhat similar vein it may be said that there are hostesses entertaining now, who never entertained before. By these, as well as by many an experienced housewife, the recently published book "The Whole Art of Dining and Table Decorations" (see advertisement on page 1A) will be hailed with joy. It is a most wonderfully instructive work on gastronomy, high-class modern *cuisine*, and the art of entertaining with distinction on an up-to-date style. Diners-out and epicures will read this volume with interest, and the hostess who aspires to distinction with profit.

With the advent of Christmas comes the problem of choosing suitable presents for one's friends. Among the bewildering array of gifts to be met with in the shops none is more economical, suitable, and acceptable than Hansa Platz Eau de Cologne (made, as we understand, from the old and original recipe). Many scents deteriorated so sadly during and after the war that it is indeed a pleasure to be able to procure such a refreshing and lasting perfume as Hansa Platz at so reasonable a price. It is stocked by all the leading stores and perfumers at prices ranging from 2s. 6d. to 8s. 6d.

E. GOOD'S, CAMEO CORNER, 1, NEW OXFORD STREET

Our knowledge of beads opens a window in the distant past, and as the fancy delights in everything that is beautiful, so does interest in things that may have existed in the days of the Pharaohs increase with each year.

Beads from India and China, agate necklaces with pinchbeck snaps, amber beads of enormous size, pendants of jade from Lake Baikal, red, pink, and white coral, find a place in the wonderful collection to be seen at Cameo Corner. Amethyst necklaces of exquisite violet hue (it is not generally known that these stones were used by the ancients as a charm against drunkenness) may be purchased quite reasonably.

The constant contact with modern jewellery that is certainly more delightful does not deaden the thrill of emotion when a rare intaglio ring that may have been worn by some Roman lady is placed in the hand. The association of beads with decoration is one of the oldest links of ancient and modern civilization, and necklaces and charms of all periods may be studied at Cameo Corner.

WHY THE "BRIGHT" CAME TO BRIGHTON

Everything essential to the comfort of its patrons is found at Billy's Restaurant, 91, King's Road, Brighton. Billy's is the embodiment of freshness and originality, and with it is an atmosphere of welcome most pleasant to newcomers and visitors. Billy's is undoubtedly *the* place for teas, but dinners and suppers are also served; in fact, it is the only place where suppers can be obtained as late as eleven o'clock at night. The Restaurant is not without its musical attractions, and it is obvious that Billy's Strolling Players and their pierrot costumes of black, green, and gold are a novel feature.

PATRONIZED BY ROYALTY · RECOMMENDED BY THE MEDICAL PROFESSION ·

ADAIR Ganesh Preparations

92, NEW BOND STREET, LONDON, W.
Phone: GERRARD 3782.
5, RUE CAMBON, PARIS.
23, EAST 56TH STREET, NEW YORK.

Ganesh Eastern Oil is the best skin food and muscle producer in the world. Will of itself remove lines, fill out hollows, and give back life and elasticity to the skin, 6/6, 12/6, 21/6, 35/6.

Ganesh Eastern Lily Lotion, made in three colours, is a liquid powder, perfectly safe, and a great skin beautifier, 6/6, 9/6, 12/6.

Ganesh Diable Skin Tonic closes the pores, strengthens and whitens the skin, and enables it to withstand change of temperature. Also a splendid wash for the eyes, 6/6, 9/6, 12/6, 24/-.

Ganesh Eastern Cream keeps the skin soft and fine, contains a little of the Oil, and is made up to suit all skins, 2/6, 4/6, 7/6, 12/6.

Advice Gratis.
Write for Free Book.

THE IDEAL GIFT FOR HER OR HIM

A YEAR'S SUBSCRIPTION TO

"THE SMART SET" MAGAZINE

DANE'S INN HOUSE, 265 STRAND, W.C. 2

Sub.—United Kingdom: 18/- per annum, post free; Abroad: 19/- per annum, post free.

Please send **"THE SMART SET" MAGAZINE** *to the address given below for .....months, commencing with the issue of 192*

Herewith,.....shillings, being the amount of subscription, including postage, for period above named.

Name.....

Address.....

Date.....192

PUBLISHED ON THE 15th OF EACH MONTH.

QUALITY NOT QUANTITY.

THE wise man wants "Quality" circulation. The fool seeks quantity irrespective of quality. You wouldn't try to sell orchids in the slums where doubtless many have the artistic eye but certainly not the money to buy. Think of the "life" of your advertisement. In a daily 'tis but AN HOUR, in a weekly SEVEN days, in a monthly THIRTY days or longer if it is all interesting fiction! FIFTY THOUSAND of the RIGHT readers is worth more than TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND of the WRONG. Try "THE SMART SET," Dane's Inn House, 265 Strand, W.C. 2.